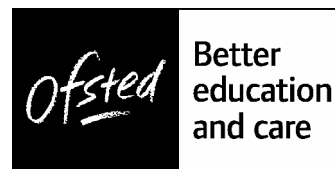


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11 December 2006

Ms Mariane Cavalli
Principal
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Dear Ms Cavalli

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 07 December 2006. I am particularly grateful to John Stopani and David Lewin for their time and 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.

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. These are reported in the order of the common inspection framework.

How well do learners achieve?

- Retention and pass rates in hospitality and catering are high; including those for students aged 14 to 16. Progression into college is good and level 1 and level 2 results are better than the predictions by the schools. Attendance is excellent; monitoring of attendance and follow up are rigorous. Tracking of students is good and there is positive recognition of students' achievements at award events with local employers.

How effective are teaching, training and learning?

- Teachers on the 14 to 16 programme are developing appropriate teaching and support strategies and the college ensures that the schools and parents are kept fully informed about each student's progress. Year 10 students on the plumbing course are very positive about the course and the help and guidance they receive. Student evaluations of the 14 to 16 programme are also very positive about the teaching and support.
- CoVE teachers participate well in 14 to 16 curriculum developments and staff development activities. They are kept well informed about curriculum developments related to the CoVEs. Though participation in staff development is good and there has been much joint staff development activity, it was not possible to assess the effectiveness of such training on improving assessment practices and its impact on learners
- Good progress is being made in developing resources and especially the rebuild programme of workshops. Links with schools at both director and operational level are excellent.

How well do programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners? How effective is curriculum development?

- The increased flexibility programme (IFP) is well established and there are close links between the two CoVEs and the development of the curriculum offer to schools. Through the two CoVEs, the college has been able to develop its new catering and enterprise in construction courses, offering good vocational provision for Year 10 and 11 learners. Sharing of resources and expertise with the schools is good and there is an established programme of joint continuing professional development involving the schools and college.
- Curriculum development involving employers and employability skills has been effective. Work with local employers, particularly a large international employer, has helped development of employability skills. The partnership with the local schools provides a good basis for developing the specialised diplomas in terms of productive collaboration, progression and shared expertise. Other links, for example through the Croydon 14 to 19 partnership and the Croydon business partnership, also provide good vehicles for diploma development.
- Common timetable slots between the college and schools have been established, but moves to establish a common timetable across the borough are still under discussion.
- The director of skills and the head of schools and community liaison have made effective use of their association with the lead bodies, the sector skills councils and the London South action team to set up the level 2 enterprise in construction programme. The CoVE has been an important focus for bringing together engineering and construction and sharing good practice in engaging employers and celebrating the achievements of learners.
- Preparing teachers for the new specialised diplomas is being undertaken by the college, though it was not possible to ascertain the extent of

current staff knowledge. There has been some staff development within schools, but it is at too early a stage to judge impact and effectiveness.

How well are learners guided and supported?

- The college offers a good range of courses at levels 1 and 2 and progression pathways are being developed effectively. There is good communication between the college, schools and parents. Before learners come onto the course they have formal interviews involving their parents/carers and the college. Demand for participation exceeds the places available. No work has yet taken place on advising learners about the specialised diplomas, but the good structures already in place for current programmes can provide a model for future development.

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

- Communications between the schools and the college, particularly CoVE staff, are good and resources are used effectively. The college is providing strong leadership on the development of the specialised diplomas and using its staff expertise well. Examples of using expertise in relation to diploma development are:
 - full college representation at 14 to 19 specialist diploma planning meetings;
 - planned meetings with school heads of department (design and technology) to audit skills against specialised diploma specifications;
 - work with the London South action team for construction and building services engineering;
 - presentations by college staff at regional conferences on effective partnership working, employer engagement and 14 to 19 curriculum development.
- Views of employers are sought and they have been actively involved in the design of the two new courses in catering and enterprise in construction. In one example of good practice, a large international employer invites learners to work on its premises and other sites and trains them in health and safety. It also works well in partnership with the college to recognise the achievements of the students with award certificates.
- There has been good staff development to support teachers on courses for learners aged 14 to 16.
- The head of schools and community and the director of skills are providing clear leadership and direction, based on a sound understanding and experience of their work with employers and the industry. The expertise of the college is being well used by the schools and the local authority in the Gateway submission.

Areas for development which you are either working towards or might need to consider are:

- how to ensure commitment of resources on a borough wide basis to support the development and implementation of the diploma strategy
- hastening progress towards harmonising timetables between the schools and the college
- completing the curriculum audit and mapping
- further development of information and guidance structures.

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

Yours sincerely

Peter Green
Her Majesty's Inspector