

26 February 2007

Ms Pauline Waterhouse  
Principal  
Blackpool and the Fylde College  
Ashfield Road  
Bispham  
Blackpool  
FY2 0HB

Dear Ms Waterhouse

Ofsted Subject and Survey Inspection Programme 2006/07  
Sector Skills Area 04 – Engineering and manufacturing technology

Thank you for the hospitality and co-operation shown to me by all the college staff who met me during my visit on 23 and 24 January. I am particularly grateful to teaching 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, observation of five lessons, and tours of accommodation. Work and resources on both the main engineering site and at the maritime centre were observed

I said I would provide a summary of my observations and of the good practice seen and to suggest areas for development.

Good practice observed

- The high success rates, attributable to high retention and pass rates, across the subject sector area. Key skills success rates and apprenticeship framework achievements are also high.

- The good quality of the teaching. I particularly noted
  - the careful planning of lessons and the use of the learning objectives to check on progress during lessons
  - the good variety of teaching methods planned into the lessons
  - the benefit that the excellent accommodation and equipment bring to the quality of the teaching
  - the excellent use of ILT, including the virtual learning environments, which enhances teaching
  - the benefits that teachers who are comfortable with new equipment and who maintain close links with the relevant industry bring to the teaching
  - the real working practices which are introduced into teaching of motor vehicle servicing
  - excellent teaching materials
  - the good rapport teachers have established with learners
  - learners who respond well, with many showing high levels of interest and attainment in their vocational area
  - the strong attention given to health and safety
  - the extra subject support provided to learners when they need it
  
- The detailed and helpful preparation for the building of work-based learning portfolios, the review of their completion and the monitoring to ensure their eventual successful completion.
- The management of key and basic skills teaching. In particular the close links the teachers have with the vocational area, their role in course tutorship, the aim (achieved) of making key skills delivery and progress monitoring as simple as possible, yet keeping it vocationally relevant, and the streaming of learners according to attainment onto basic or key skills work.
- The wide range of programmes and the curriculum mapping to help ensure appropriate progression routes and to help sustain high progression rates. The flexibility of modes of attendance, with delivery chosen to suit the customer. The tailoring of courses to meet the needs of the industry, for example, the inclusion of units of work which they want. The innovatory nature of some of the curriculum, for example the gaming academy and auto-sport.
- The strong links that are maintained and nurtured with industry, which have clear benefits for resource development, teachers' professional development and curriculum development. The strong research and development activity which is undertaken with industry. The use of reception staff to market full-cost work.
- The Key Stage 4 work. I was particularly impressed by the work being done with higher attaining pupils on the first diploma course. The high achievements on this course have clear benefits for the pupils, the schools and the college.
- The strong and effective support provided by the additional learning support tutors and the education support workers. The work these staff do in, for example, mentoring to help learners overcome difficulties and

improve, for example, attendance. The formality of these arrangements with for example behaviour plans and weekly review meetings.

- The value of having residential accommodation to help attract provision of a national nature such as the marine work and the work with major motor vehicle companies.
- The wide range of equipment, much of which is outstanding.
- The strong IV system and the attention to ensuring processes are adhered to through the ISO accreditation.
- The strong attention to professional development and to the improvement of teaching and learning.
- The clear management structure and the strong management arrangements for course delivery and assessment, subject leadership, teaching and learning and pastoral support. I found those aspects of the self assessment report which I looked at to be accurate.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- a few aspects of teaching, for example teachers' use of questioning to ensure all are following could be improved in a small number of lessons and the use of simulation, for example to speed up the development of learners understanding of the controls associated with machine tools.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop engineering and manufacturing courses.

Yours sincerely

Colin Evans  
Her Majesty's inspector