

08 March 2007

Ms Di Dale  
Principal  
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Dear Ms Dale

Ofsted Subject Survey Inspection Programme 2006/07

Sector Skills Area 5 – Construction

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on 01 and 02 February 2007. I am particularly grateful to you and all your staff for the hard work that took place to prepare for the visit and for giving up a great deal of time during the visit to meet with me. Please pass on my thanks to all those concerned.

This visit is part of a series to provision in SSA 5 graded good or better at its most recent inspection, in order to evaluate how good practice has been brought about, further improved and sustained. The visit provided much useful evidence for the good practice survey in construction. 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. All letters, following survey visits, will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: lesson observations; interviews with staff and learners; scrutiny of the examples of good practice provided including a tour of resources. I agreed to provide a summary of the observations of good practice seen and to suggest some areas for development.

Good practice observed

- The particularly good support for learners. Staff pay particular interest in the progress made by learners. Most learners speak very highly of the additional support, advice and guidance given by staff. Many staff provide additional 'catch-up' sessions for students and assist with portfolio building activities outside normal timetabled lessons.

- The strong focus on improving provision. There is good support from the college management team with effective action planning, monitoring and evaluation. Useful staff development provided by both internal and external specialist practitioners has had a positive impact on teaching and learning and has contributed to improving success rates.
- The rigorous monitoring of department progress and performance. Quality assurance arrangements are robust and rigorously applied. There is a strong commitment from construction managers and staff to improve provision. Action planning for improvement is detailed, clearly focused, and based on a sound evaluation of department performance.
- The well devised tutorial, advice and guidance programme. The college has successfully developed a 'community campus' programme that includes many of the every child matters themes with materials produced to support the delivery and integration of these into curriculum area tutorial programmes.
- The well planned theory teaching. Learning outcomes are clearly defined and teachers use a variety of strategies to encourage learner participation and engagement. Theory teaching is very closely linked to related practical activities.
- The particularly effective arrangements for assessment in the plumbing. Learners have good access to assessors who frequently visit learners in the workplace to conduct assessment. Facilities for assessment in the college are well designed and provide good real-life working environments.
- The good development of learners' practical skills. Learners benefit from gaining skills over and above qualification requirements which are valued by employers in the workplace. The standard of work produced by many learners is high.
- The good progression into industry employment or further training. Many learners gain employment within the industry during the period of, or at the end of their course. A significant number of learners also progress to further training, to a course at a higher level or to other courses to broaden their industry skills and knowledge.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- to improve the physical resources available for teaching, training and assessment
- to further develop systems to enable more effective tracking of learner progress across all aspects of their programme.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop construction provision in the college.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your LLSC. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Paul Joyce  
Her Majesty's Inspector