

22 February 2007

Mrs Jackie Fisher  
Principal  
Newcastle College  
Rye Hill Campus  
Scotswood Road  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
Tyne and Wear  
NE4 7SA

Dear Mrs Fisher

Ofsted Subject Survey Inspection Programme 2006/07

Sector Skills Area 5 – Construction

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on 13 and 14 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 effective/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 good leadership and management. Positive action has been taken to improve the quality of provision. Targets for improvement are meticulously set against key college priorities. Targets are effectively

delegated to individual staff and teams and are well monitored. Overall success rates have improved on many courses.

- The particularly effective 'train to gain' programme. The college runs a particularly effective train to gain programme which is very responsive to the needs of construction employers. The number of learners is increasing significantly and the success rates on many courses are outstanding.
- The good and improving teaching and learning. The monitoring of teaching and learning is robust. Over the last three years the college observation system confirms that teaching and learning has improved. A teaching mentor supports the large number of new construction teachers well in preparing and delivering lessons and the support remains in place until teachers are enrolled on teacher training courses.
- The good theory teaching. A wide variety of approaches are used that effectively engage learners. Lesson planning is good. Teachers draw effectively on their own site experience and make good use of the contributions of learners in the group. Learning is checked frequently and the learning resources used are of high quality.
- The very effective use of information learning technology (ILT). Most teachers routinely incorporate ILT into their lessons. Teachers are very skilled in the operation of the interactive whiteboards and use their skills effectively to engage learners and to make theory lessons more interesting. Some teachers make use of video clips, photographic images, split screens and access to relevant web sites to reinforce learning. The use of voting systems enables learners to check their own understanding during question and answer sessions.
- The wide range of responsive provision with good progression opportunities. There is a wide range of provision which effectively meets the needs of learners and local industry. Full-time, part-time and block release attendance are available. All major crafts are offered from level one to level three and there are a good range of construction technician courses available.
- The high standard of work on construction technician programmes. Learners produce a high standard of completed assignment work. The assignments are well-designed and closely aligned to the needs of local industry. The drawings produced by learners on the computer aided design courses are of a very high standard.
- The well planned and varied approach to assessment. Assessment is well planned and meets the needs of learners. On-site assessment is well established and there are work-based assessors in each trade who carry out direct observation of competence in the workplace. Assessment feedback is good in some areas and learners are clear what they need to do to improve.
- The good tracking and monitoring of learner progress. Tracking of learner progress is good through an effective electronic tracking system which is used across all construction trades. The tracking of

individual units and of apprenticeship frameworks are recorded by section leaders. Learners are frequently informed about their progress and are set targets accordingly.

- The particularly effective employer engagement which enhances the curriculum. The college is very responsive to the needs of employers. Construction staff are proactive in developing and improving links with employers. The college works closely with employers and regeneration groups which are re-shaping Newcastle. Employers speak highly of the responsiveness of the college and are well represented on the Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) forum.
- The very good resources for construction education and training. Resources for construction education and training are outstanding at the new Construction Academy which was opened in 2005. The Academy provides training for bricklaying, plastering, roof tiling and slating and roof sheeting and cladding. The workshops provide ample space and very good training and assessment rigs. Resources at the Ryehill campus and at the West End campus for all other construction trades and technicians are good. Most workshops provide realistic simulations of workplace activities.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- to improve overall and timely success rates on advanced apprenticeship programmes
- to provide more enrichment opportunities for full-time learners
- to develop further the arrangements for staff industrial updating.

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

Mike Berry  
ALI Inspector