

08 March 2007

Mr Ioan Morgan CBE  
Principal  
Warwickshire College  
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Dear Mr Morgan

Ofsted Subject Survey Programme 2006/07

Sector Skills Area 3: Agriculture, horticulture and animal care

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on 21 February. I am particularly grateful to the 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 learners who gave up their time to talk to me.

The visit provided much useful evidence for the good practice subject survey in agriculture, horticulture and animal care. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but should we wish to include specific aspects of practice we will contact the college first. All college letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform judgements included: interviews with staff and learners; scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of good practice examples.

I agreed to provide a summary of my observations of good practice seen in animal care, horticulture, agriculture and equine studies and to suggest some areas for development.

Good practice observed included:

- very good curriculum management with a clear focus on teaching and learning and the needs of learners, with good support for course leaders and members of staff including through the use of a course leader checklist, advanced teaching practitioners and mentors

- very effective systems for sharing good practice in teaching and learning using a range of methods including the well-established 'Warwickshire Way' which develops, standardises and shares effective teaching approaches, 'Prac-Chats' which involve practical teachers in sharing tips and techniques, peer observations, and through formal staff development
- the use of an annual stock handling event judged by industry representatives and open to the public, which provides valuable learning of key employability skills as well as the practical skills of livestock handling
- the use of high quality learning resources including learning games, learning resources boxes and distance learning materials developed in partnership with land-based industries, including a popular health and safety package for the equine industry
- well-designed new buildings which enhance learning with simple but very effective additions such as readily available sets of clip boards and stackable stools
- the use of a mechanical horse to teach riding skills and develop correct posture
- the use of good systems for disseminating information within specialist land-based units such as the farm, which are regularly updated, promote health and safety and are accessible to learners enabling them to be fully involved in many of the activities that take place
- a proactive approach to environmental sustainability both within the land-based curriculum and promoted well within the college as a whole
- excellent links across land-based industries used well to enhance learning through visits, resources and enrichment as well as industrial advisory groups which are used effectively to ensure the curriculum maintains currency
- a wide range of land-based curriculum enrichment activities including the opportunity to undertake short courses and gain industry specific additional qualifications which enhance career prospects of learners.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- further development and use of the land-based aspect of the intranet
- the long term planning of individual learning.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop land-based courses in the college.

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

Bryan Davies  
ALI