

12 March 2007

Dr R Parker  
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Dear Dr Parker

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 7 March. I am particularly grateful to the land-based 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, lesson observations and observation of good practice examples.

I agreed to provide a summary of my observations of good practice seen in land-based provision and to suggest some areas for development.

Good practice observed included:

- much improved success rates resulting from increased awareness and use of performance data to track students' progress, careful curriculum planning to ensure that courses match student needs and abilities and increased accountability for the quality of courses and student performance by course leaders and middle managers

- the use of effective and standardised practices through the 'Chichester Learning Model' to improve the quality of lesson planning and to place high emphasis on learning within lessons
- good strategies to improve the teaching of theory through clear identification of learning objectives, well-structured teaching with plenty of emphasis on student involvement in learning, careful timetabling to ensure a productive balance and link between theory and practical lessons and creative and imaginative use of teaching techniques such as games and quizzes to enliven theory subjects
- effective sharing of good practice through staff development sessions including regular 'spotlight' sessions where staff bring and share ideas about and approaches to successful teaching techniques
- effective promotion of the use of information and learning technology (ILT) through the proactive work of an ILT champion and a willingness and enthusiasm amongst teachers to learn and use new techniques
- good use of timed tasks and exercises in lessons to ensure that students remain focused and to increase the level of challenge to complete work at a realistic pace
- the use of relevant and meaningful tasks in lessons that ensure that students are fully involved in the work of the college land-based operations in a realistic working environment
- good curriculum development including maintaining a broad land-based curriculum, the provision of level 1 courses in all land-based subject areas, very productive work with schools and maximising links with other curriculum areas within the college
- productive collaboration with a number of schools, including the provision of 'Waterwise' gardens in conjunction with Southern Water in five secondary schools, links with specials schools and provision for vulnerable and excluded pupils
- a well-established lesson observation scheme which includes the effective use of external observers working in conjunction with college-based observers to produce a realistic and helpful view of the quality of teaching and learning
- good strategic planning and implementation of action points in relation to the development of the estate and animal resources including the promotion of modern agricultural practices such as the production of meat boxes using college-produced meat including from outdoor pigs
- the implementation of two CoVEs in land-based provision, one in horticultural technology and one in rural enterprise, both of which contribute well to land-based courses but also to local and regional land-based industry needs.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- further development of the use of ILT, including promoting its use outside of lessons by students and the development of systems for holding animal records electronically
- promoting environmental awareness and good practice over an above where this occurs naturally in the curriculum, and spreading the good

practice in promoting the principles of environmental sustainability that exists in some subjects, such as agriculture, more widely throughout all areas, especially animal care and equine studies

- establishing a minimum target grade for each student at the start of their course to help motivate them and to assist in measuring the progress they make
- further integration of key skills work into lessons and maximising the opportunities that arise in practical tasks to develop these skills fully.

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

Philippa Francis  
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools