

06 March 2007

Ms B Sheils
Principal
Solihull College
Blossomfield Campus
Solihull
West Midlands
B91 1SB

Dear Ms Sheils

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 26 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 and floristry and to suggest some areas for development.

Good practice observed included:

- good and extensive use of innovative teaching and learning activities on animal care courses
- good quality e-learning materials for the National Diploma Animal Care students

- good practical project work
- good teaching of equality and diversity in the tutorial programme
- work placements are well integrated into teaching
- good use of "Faculty Days" to share good practice amongst staff
- effective 'student at risk' system aimed at improving attendance and retention, that is showing evidence of impact.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- underdeveloped teaching of environmental sustainability on all courses
- insufficient use of formal industry advisory panels
- the absence of a formal teaching and learning strategy.

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

Keith Boulnois
Additional Inspector