

08 March 2007

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Dear Mr Vincent

Ofsted Subject and Survey Inspection Programme 2006/07

Sector Skills Area 04– Engineering and manufacturing technology

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on 25 and 26 January. I am particularly grateful to teaching and other 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 students who gave up their time to talk to me.

The visit provided much useful evidence for the good practice survey. 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. College letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term and copied to the LSC. The letters will also be available to the next inspection team to visit the college and to inform your AAV visits.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of four lessons.

I have provided below a summary of my observations, the good practice seen and suggested areas for development.

Good practice observed included:

- Improving success rates, with the success rate in 05-06 for adult learners well above the national average and that for learners aged 16-18 close to the average.

- High success rates for work based learners. Success rates on advanced apprenticeship programmes in 2005-06 were 65% compared to the national framework rate of 49 per cent. Similarly, success rates on apprenticeship programmes in 2005-06 were 77% compared to the national framework rate of 51 per cent.
- Marked improvement in key skills success rates. College data shows that the overall success rate in engineering is well above the national average.
- All the lessons observed were of good quality. Strengths included:
 - high attendance; 93% on average
 - enthusiastic and knowledgeable teachers who planned their teaching carefully; they have a good rapport with learners, are patient and clear in their explanations and move the learning on at a pace which is appropriate to all the learners; teachers' and learners own specialist knowledge is used well to interest and motivate the learners who respond positively to the teaching.
 - excellent use of ILT in support of learning; good links are made, during the teaching, with industrial application to illuminate the teaching; interactive whiteboards are used productively; in one lesson sectioned illustrations of pneumatic and hydraulic components and video clips of sectioned components were particularly well used
 - lessons are planned well and include the consideration of learning support needs
 - lesson generally include a good range of activity and are well supported, for example, by additional staff, visual aids, hand-outs, and demonstration equipment; group work was included in most of the lessons observed; demonstration and visual aids are used particularly well; there is a good mix of hand-outs, note-taking, and computer projected notes
- Excellent partnerships with schools and industry. For example, training is delivered at in-company learning centres in JCB and Toyota, and bespoke training is developed and delivered to suit company needs. These links help to develop and maintain the resource base through donations of equipment and vehicles. Manufacturers donate valuable capital equipment to the department. Good arrangements with local secondary schools enable school students to sample the provision.
- Effective involvement of employers in curriculum development. Employers, for example are fully involved in the design of the curriculum through the employers forum group for engineering and applied science.
- Good commitment to CPD activities. Activity includes industrial placement, secondments and commercial training courses to ensure staff skills are updated regularly. Employers provide secondments and manufacturers courses to college staff.

- Some excellent facilities to support learning. Motor vehicle workshops and the advanced manufacturing centre particularly are well resourced and much of the equipment is up to date and reflects good industry standards. The quality of the accommodation and resources in Motor Vehicle is very good.
- Full-time and work-based learners' progress is monitored closely and progress is available through the shared drive. Employers are kept well informed of progress.

Areas for development, which were discussed in my verbal feedback, included:

- checking of learners' knowledge and understanding. For example the answers to teachers questions were dominated by a few learners, and insufficient use is made of questioning to assess the learning that is taking place
- the use of the internet to improve learning. This is at an early stage of development
- use of data to monitor performance. For example key skills data were difficult to obtain and trends in success rates are not sufficiently well considered
- some aspects of planning. For example schemes of work do not identify sufficiently the opportunities to develop key skills and lesson plans don't give detail on how teaching is to be matched to the higher or lower attaining learner.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop engineering and manufacturing courses.

Yours sincerely

Bob Busby
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