

21 March 2007

Mrs F McMillan OBE
Principal
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Dear Mrs McMillan

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 12 and 13 February. 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

- Very good teaching and learning. Lessons are well planned and make good use of a range of resources, strategies and consolidating activities to engage learners and promote learning.
- Excellent resources to support learning. Practical resources, including industry standard workshops and well equipped classrooms, underpin

an environment which helps promote learning well. Staff are enthusiastic, and are focussed sharply on the needs of learners.

- Very good use of information and learning technology (ILT). Computers in classrooms, software packages and electronic diagnostic and test equipment are well used by teachers. The VLE contains a good range of course related information and is well used by learners. Very good IT systems have been developed to track learners' progress.
- The high standard of students' work. High quality practical work is displayed within engineering areas. Students produce detailed and impressive written assignments and other project work. Students display, through their verbal contributions, a good level of knowledge and achieve good success in skills-based competitions.
- Detailed and highly effective quality control processes. The use of self-assessment, quality reviews and quality improvement strategies contribute very effectively to overall quality improvement. Advanced practitioners play an important role in quality improvement and are used well.
- Effective recruitment and staff development processes. Applicants for academic posts undergo a rigorous selection process including the assessment of their ability to teach, a process which involves students and senior managers. New staff are very well supported by mentors. All staff are regarded as a key asset of the college and undertake a good range of professional development.
- Excellent employer engagement. The college is very responsive to the needs of local, regional and national employers. This is reflected in curriculum developments, involvement in the establishment of a Motor Industry Skills Consortium and links with Sector Skills Councils.
- Highly effective learner selection, induction and support processes. Pre-enrolment and induction activities are detailed, varied and comprehensive. Staff and students speak highly of their effectiveness in ensuring that students are on the right course. Tutorial and additional support arrangements are very good.

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

- success rates on some level 1 courses and for work-based learners studying automotive courses
- health and safety markings in the automotive workshops.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Short
Additional inspector