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Mr C Goodwin
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Goodwin

Ofsted Subject and Survey Inspection Programme 2006/07

Sector Skills Area 2: Science and mathematics post-16

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on 27 March 2007. I am particularly grateful to you, other senior managers and 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 other staff and learners who gave up their time to talk to me.

The visit provided useful evidence for the good practice survey in science. 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 school first. All school/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, analysis of learners' work and observation of two lessons.

I agreed to provide a summary of my observations of good practice seen in the sciences and to suggest some areas for development.

Good practice observed

Learners' achievement

- Good results and value added were attained in 2004-05.
- Students' files are well organised with work that is at least at the level expected for their course.
- Students' responses in lessons are lucid and show confidence in themselves and the subject matter.
- The current cohort of students on AS level courses is performing better than in previous year.

Teaching, training and learning

- Much student involvement in lessons through a good variety of activities.
- Effective questioning and checking on learning.
- Systematic development of the subject with good use of students' prior knowledge.
- Thorough tracking of students' progress.
- Good use of information and learning technologies in lessons.
- Extensive enrichment programme.
- Regular and frequent assessments.
- Routine use of minimum target grades to measure students' progress.

Guidance and support

- Teachers and tutors give freely of their time to help students.
- Support is closely linked to tracking of students' progress.

Leadership and management

- The development and use of information and learning technology is encouraged and has developed well.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- the recent decline in poor value added and results in 2005-06 at A2 level
- individualised learning plans are in need of development; some action planning takes place with individuals but needs to be formalised and extended to all learners
- slow progress in the promotion of independent learning
- insufficiently systematic approach to internal lesson observation and the sharing of good practice
- managing the provision across the two schools involved in the delivery slows down initiatives and speedy improvements.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop science courses in the school.

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

John Phipps
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools (Retired)