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Ms J Fisher
Principal
Newcastle College
Scotswood Road
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Dear Ms Fisher

Ofsted subject survey: good practice in promoting equality

Thank you for the hospitality and co-operation of your staff during my visit on 20 November 2008 to look at success factors in promoting equality and improving the outcomes for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions, but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included meetings with college staff, meetings with students, observation of teaching and learning, scrutiny of documentation.

The quality of provision to promote equalities for learners with learning difficulties and /or disabilities is outstanding.

Features of good practice and success factors observed

- The success rates for learners with disabilities on mainstream provision have been consistently around five percentage points above those of other learners for many years.
- Learners on mainstream courses progress well through different levels at the college, as well as to HE and employment
- All of the learners on the discreet employment preparation programme found some form of employment on leaving in 2008. This is a new programme that has been developed in response to the LSC's national strategy. The programme has been developed with a clear focus on preparation for employment, and the development of skills of independence. Of particular significance in enabling this to happen has been the development of real work initiatives in catering, horticulture

and retail. These provide learners with excellent opportunities to develop their employability skills, their inter-personal skills and understand the relevance of literacy and numeracy skills in context.

- Collaboration with supported employment agencies and other agencies specialising in finding employment, or supporting people with disabilities to find and retain employment, has been significant in helping learners find successful placements on leaving.
- The college's numbers on mainstream courses in receipt of additional learning support have increased significantly over the past four years, as has the college's capacity to make suitable adjustments for learners. Specialist staff have been employed with specialisms such as mental health, autistic spectrum disorder, dyslexia and sensory disabilities. The college is clear that the adjustments made are to enable learners to become as independent as possible, and forms part of the learner's transition to further learning or employment. The support provided varies with need, and the learner, teacher and support services staff review progress at least half-termly. Early disclosure is encouraged, and the supportive ethos in the college has been successful in enabling learners to feel more confident about disclosure. Where appropriate, staff liaise with any receiving organisation to ensure that the staff fully understand the type and level of support required as learners progress to employment or further learning.
- The college's resources for supporting learners are outstanding. College staff have collaborated with national disability specialists to ensure that their accessibility facilities are up to date, and that learners have the necessary equipment to benefit from tuition in line with their peers.
- The college actively promotes and markets disability equality throughout the organisation, with specialist staff available at all sites and for all 'schools' of study. Staff training in equalities is mandatory, and governors receive detailed reports on progress in equalities.
- The systems for monitoring the effectiveness of the provision are rigorous, with termly reviews of progress that include equalities performance indicators and targets.
- The college's disability equality policy emphasises the centrality of the voices of learners with disabilities. They contribute to a range of different committees and influence change in the college.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop promoting equalities in the college.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local LSC and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Joyce Deere
Her Majesty's Inspector