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Mr M Nicholson
Assistant Principal
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Dear Mr Nicholson

Ofsted survey inspection programme – 14-19 reforms

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your colleagues and students during my visit on 10 March 2009, as part of our survey on 14-19 developments in the local area.

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.

Furness College has developed its curriculum very well to meet the needs and interests of young people in the local and broader area. This includes the introduction of the level 2 & 3 Diploma programmes in IT, which complement and build on other well established vocational and applied programmes. Young people on these courses have developed much improved vocational and social skills and work with a maturity beyond their years, and as a consequence greatly improve their employability skills. The College has successfully added the Diploma pathway within its portfolio of technology programmes and supports these programmes with good resources, and provides good guidance and support.

The College has demonstrated a strong commitment to partnership working with local schools and the local authority. Links with partner schools are well established. However, the provision of a shared curriculum with these schools and other parts of the College is less well developed. The current arrangements for the additional and specialist learning do not take advantage of the range and expertise available in these and other providers to add even greater flexibility and range to the Diploma programmes. The engagement of employers to enhance the learning experience and to reinforce key learning points in the curriculum is under-developed, although there has been effective dialogue with employers during the initial planning phases for the Diplomas.

Teaching on the Diploma is good, with the learning experiences being well planned and very well delivered. The sessions have a good blend of activities and a clear focus on the young peoples' personal learning goals. Learners speak highly of the support and help they receive and of the improved confidence and self-esteem they have developed from the challenging tasks provided. The learning sessions make good use of the colleges resources and provide a realistic working experience for the young people.

The commitment, participation and support of the College have contributed significantly to the planning and implementation of the 14-19 reforms in the Furness area.

If there are any points or aspects of the visit you wish to discuss, please get in touch. As we will be evaluating the survey, you may be contacted in the future to find out your views. I hope you will contribute to this evaluation. Thank you once again.

Yours sincerely

Barry Barrett-Mold
Additional Inspector