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Ms C Hill
Vice Principal
Curriculum and Standards
Blackpool and the Fylde College
Ashfield Road
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Dear Ms Hill

Ofsted subject survey: good practice in promoting equality

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff during my visit on 20 January 2009 to look at success factors in promoting equality and improving the outcomes for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender learners (LGBT).

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, meetings with external partners, observation of teaching and learning and scrutiny of documentation.

The quality of provision to promote equalities for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender learners is outstanding.

Features of good practice and success factors observed

The outstanding leadership and management in the embedding of equality and diversity particularly for LGBT learners

The Principal leads on equality and diversity which sends out a strong message to staff and learners about the culture and inclusivity of the college. Inclusive and specialist learning mentors support learners not only with additional learning support but also with life-style support. They work with learners who have been identified as 'at risk', who are in danger of becoming 'at risk' and learners who have expressed a need for support to help them

deal with issues around being LGBT. The learner voice is valued and there is a strong focus in the planning and delivery of equality initiatives. For example, the student union equality and diversity officer has recently promoted the 'No Disrespect' campaign which was devised by the student union. Learners are represented on the equality and diversity committee and also on the sexuality committee. Staff training in equality and diversity is mandatory. They are well supported with staff development activities, and many staff have chosen to undertake accredited training programmes through the Navajo Project for sexual orientation.

Improving outcomes for learners

Although learners are not required to formally disclose if they are LGBT, many do. Learners are tracked throughout their courses and there has been a positive impact for LGBT learners in terms of increased retention and success rates.

The sharing of best practice in promoting equality and diversity both internally and externally

Innovative approaches to developing best practice include the use of action research projects to explore current practice within the college, action planning for its development and evaluating the impact for learners. An example is an action research project around supporting LGBT learners to achieve success. The college has also been actively involved with a project with Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL) called 'Visible and Valued', a training pack with accompanying DVD to explore challenges faced in relation to sexual orientation. Continuing professional development opportunities ensures that best practice is shared amongst all staff at the college. Some staff provide bespoke training, advice and guidance for other colleges in sharing and transferring best practice. The Principal and senior staff play an active role in the North West Equalities Network and are regular contributors to the Association of Colleges conferences.

Effective marketing strategies to promote equality and diversity

Innovative marketing strategies to raise the profile of equality and diversity in the college include the 'EQUALITY – we're not joking' campaign which uses 'stand up jokes' to highlight issues of equality and diversity. The deckchair campaign uses 'characters' that replace the traditional stripes such as the gay flag deckchair and the guide dog deckchair to provide examples of diversity within society. The campaign has won the 'Strategic Marketing Award' at the HEIST National Education Marketing Awards and the college has been sharing this best practice with FE and HE Institutions.

Outstanding collaborative partnerships to support LGBT learners

The college has been working closely with a range of agencies to support LGBT learners since 1994. Even before legislation was introduced around

sexuality, the college was actively involved with the lesbian and gay community support group. This has been developed to include a number of agencies including work with the police in acting against homophobic and transphobic hate crime; the LGBT community development officer and the equality and diversity lead for the Lancashire Care NHS Trust and with the Navajo Project. The significant work that has been undertaken with partners has culminated in the college winning the CEL learner voice, social cohesion award for 2008.

Areas for development

None found, but the college is to continue to develop its use of the "Who are you to judge me?" resource.

The college has already started to develop the use of this very powerful tool of a music video and case study to support the use of anti-bullying strategies. The college will be using this during induction with new learners in 2009 to provide them with an awareness of the effects that 'bullying and harassment' can have on individuals.

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

Anita Pyrkotsch-Jones
Additional Inspector