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Mr Peter Tavernor
Principal
The Manchester College
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Dear Mr Tavernor

Ofsted 2009-10 survey inspection programme – Girls' and young women's achievement

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, during my visit on 7 October 2009, to examine the causes of girls' and young women's underachievement and long-term economic well-being and the good practice that effectively supports them.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national survey report. 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: discussions with staff; observation of part of two lessons; discussions with two groups of young women; feedback from local employers; relevant documentation provided by the college.

Overall, your work on promoting the achievement of young women, and in developing their future economic well-being is good. Young women have a general awareness of future career opportunities and develop good personal and employability skills. The college has a strong focus on social inclusion and supports young women well. The majority of young women choose stereotypical vocational courses and the numbers of young women following construction and engineering courses at the college is still low.

Features of effective practice observed, include:

- good recruitment and retention of particularly vulnerable young women
- good development of personal and employability skills

- well-planned and delivered teaching sessions which effectively engage and motivate young women
- good focus by college on designing the curriculum around the needs of local communities and employer needs
- strong collaborative and partnership working with community organisations and employers to develop targeted and flexible programmes for hard to engage groups, for example, provision for young people not in education, employment or training and teen parents and the vocational carousel programmes
- strong strategic focus on recruiting, supporting and retaining both males and females with multiple social and personal problems from deprived wards of the city to promote economic well-being
- coherent, well-integrated and highly effective arrangements for care, support and guidance
- early identification of at-risk groups, followed by timely and well-tailored support
- A clear college strategy successfully designed around social inclusion.

Areas for further improvement, which we discussed, include:

- the recruitment of more young women on to construction and engineering programmes
- further development of materials and teaching and learning activities to challenge stereotypes
- further development of the college's good liaison work with schools to increase girls' and young women's awareness of vocational courses and career opportunities.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to promote achievement and develop the economic well-being of girls and young women.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda Truscott
Her Majesty's Inspector