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Mr H O'Keeffe  
Principal  
Bracknell and Wokingham College  
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Dear Mr O'Keeffe

Ofsted 2009-10 survey inspection programme: the role of employers in work-related education and training

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation during my visit on 14 January 2010. I am particularly grateful to you and all your staff for the hard work involved in preparing for the visit and for giving up time during the visit to meet me. Please pass on my thanks to all those concerned.

The visit provided valuable information that will contribute to our national survey of good practice in the role that employers play in work-related education and training. Published reports are likely to list the names of contributing organisations but individual contributors will not be identified in the main text.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with six staff, three employers and four learners; an observation of a learner's progress review; and scrutiny of the examples of good practice provided. A range of documents, case studies and data were also reviewed.

I agreed to provide a summary of the good practice seen and to identify some areas for development and outline the main findings below.

The main strengths

- Overall and timely success rates for advanced apprentices are high and well above national rates. Train to Gain overall success rates are above national rates in 2008/09. At level 2, they are consistently high, but at level 3 they dipped to slightly below national rates in 2007/08. The college's data show that overall and timely success rates for apprentices are high. However, this is not yet substantiated by the published data from the Learning and Skills Council.

- The college offers a good range of courses which meets employers' needs well. This includes distance learning packages, short courses and workshops. Staff make good use of their specialist knowledge to develop courses that are relevant to industry. Partnerships with other colleges and training providers are used well to tailor learners' programmes to their individual needs.
- Learners have access to some excellent learning resources. The college's new site at Church Road has up-to-date, industry standard electrical installation equipment and tools that enhance learning in the workplace. Health and social care employers collaborate well with the college to produce learning and promotional resources, including a DVD about working in the sector and e-learning packages for safeguarding. Employers and the college share resources and accommodation productively to ensure that learners have the most appropriate learning experience for each topic.
- The provision is particularly flexible and responsive. Employers and learners value the way that trainers and assessors deliver courses to fit in with their work patterns, including shift and seven-day working. College staff are very good at finding solutions for learning and development issues identified by employers. If employers have insufficient learners to run a viable course, college staff take the initiative to contact local employers to form groups of learners from complementary organisations.
- Employers' and the college's training are linked effectively. The college has introduced a fee structure that encourages employers to provide their own training to reduce the cost of courses. Employers' training is generally mapped well to learners' qualifications. This is particularly successful for health and social care young apprentices, where their work-placement is used towards their GCSE.
- Employers are fully involved in learners' progress reviews. They have a good understanding of the learners' programme, their progress and actions that need to be completed. Employers, learners and assessors discuss thoroughly the activities taking place at work, which are routinely used towards assessment. Employers benefit from receiving updates on health and safety and equality and diversity during progress reviews.
- Employers and the college receive substantial benefits from work-related education and training. Employers provide support for the college with promotional events, progression routes for full-time learners and young apprentices and in ensuring a relevant curriculum. Employers and learners comment favourably about the college's reputation and provide repeat business. Employers note improvements in staff retention, their improved focus on work and the development of a multi-skilled workforce as a result of training provided by the college.
- Some employers provide good support for learners in preparing for initial assessment tests in literacy and numeracy. The learning and development staff at one employer have taken key skills qualifications to increase their understanding of the subject and improve the help they can provide internally. Some learners, particularly those who have not recently

participated in learning, find the initial assessment tests daunting and perceive this as a barrier to learning.

The main area for further development is:

- to work with all employers to ensure they offer suitable support, reassurance and, where appropriate, practice test papers for learners before they sit initial assessment tests of literacy and numeracy.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the provision. If there are any points you wish to discuss, please contact me. We gather information on the impact of our visits. To this end, you may be contacted by telephone or sent a questionnaire to complete six to 12 months after the visit. I hope you will contribute to this evaluation.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website and will be available to the team for your next inspection.

Yours sincerely

Janet Rodgers  
Her Majesty's Inspector