

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



11 December 2009

Ms K Hunt  
Head of Nursing Services  
VENAC (Pet Health Education)  
Unit 4 Mowat Industrial Estate  
Sandown Road  
Watford  
WD24 7UY

Dear Ms Hunt

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 3 November 2009. I am particularly grateful to you and all your staff for the hard work involved in preparing for the visit and for giving up a great deal of 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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with 13 staff, five employers and six learners; observations of information, advice and guidance sessions; and scrutiny of the examples of good practice provided. Several documents, case studies and data were 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 success rates were 1% above the national average at 66.7% in 2007/08. On advanced apprenticeship programmes, overall success rates were well above the national average at 100% in 2007/08. However, success rates for apprenticeships were 12% below the national average at 53.3%. In the current year, overall success rates for apprenticeships are 90.9%.

- Links with employers are particularly strong. Pet Health Education (PHE) works very closely with employers to ensure that they have a good understanding of all aspects of the veterinary nursing programme. Very good use is made of the head nurses in the practices to support learners in the workplace. This provides learners with a main contact who has a good understanding of their programme and the assessment requirements. Employers are used effectively to deliver a range of learning in the workplace. Veterinarians and senior nurses deliver off-the-job training and many are work-based assessors. Many employers have been supported and trained by PHE to become assessors, increasing their understanding of the assessment process and providing immediate access to assessment for learners.
- The induction programme is carefully planned. It includes employers and supports learners to settle into the workplace and understand their roles and responsibilities. A probationary period of employment before starting the veterinary nurse training ensures that learners fully understand all aspects of the job. It also ensures that employers fully understand their role in training, assessment and reviews. This probationary period provides particularly good information on the type of veterinary practice that the learner is best suited to and is used very effectively to assess learning styles and to ensure that learners and employers are matched well.
- Clear and detailed information on the veterinary nursing programme is given to all employers. This detailed information ensures that on-the-job training and practical experiences for apprentices are planned well. Learners in smaller practices are able to spend some time in 24-hour clinics and also accompany their vet to larger clinics and support them when carrying out complex surgeries.
- Mentors and buddies are used particularly well to support new employees, apprentices and work-based assessors. They ensure that learners are provided with a good range of opportunities to enable them to develop good working practices and to provide stretch and challenge in the workplace. Mentors support learners to develop good work skills, such as courtesy, communication and behaviour. In addition, they ensure that new assessors understand their role in the assessment process and the importance of planning the assessments.
- Communication with employers is frequent and planned well. Regular meetings with individual employers and learners provide good opportunities to discuss the learners' programme. Learners' progress reviews are well-documented and detailed. However, targets are not fully used to challenge learners. PHE has identified this as an area for improvement and, from September 2009, steps have been taken to ensure all learners have clear targets that are monitored regularly at reviews.
- PHE places a strong emphasis on ensuring all training staff have relevant industrial experience that is updated regularly. This experience ensures that training meets the changing needs of employers and that learners are equipped well to work effectively and efficiently in the industry. Employers

are used particularly effectively to support the continual professional development of the education team.

- Arrangements for safeguarding are incomplete. Some learners work alone with one veterinary surgeon. Although there are good arrangements and clear protocols in place with regard to lone working, not all veterinary surgeons have clearance through the Criminal Records Bureau. Risk-assessment arrangements are not fully established.

The main areas for further development are:

- improving the success rates of learners on apprenticeships
- implementing clear safeguarding arrangements to ensure all learners are safe.

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

Elaine Clinton  
Her Majesty's Inspector