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Ms L Smith
Principal
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Dear Ms Smith

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation during my visit on 24 February 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 once again 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 nine staff, nine students and a representative from the local authority. A range of documents, case studies and data were also reviewed.

I agreed to provide a summary of the good practice seen and outline the main findings below.

The main strengths

- The college continues to maintain the strong links with employers identified at the college's full inspection in July 2008. These links enhance provision in curriculum areas and provide students with good work experience opportunities. The tutorial programme successfully develops students' personal, social and employability skills.
- The college has a thorough and productive focus on developing students' employability which pervades the curriculum. The college intends that all students leave the college well prepared for work. Employability skills are routinely taught in each subject area, further developed through discrete workshops, and delivered in the course of tailored advice and guidance

services. Teaching staff have a wide range of relevant industry backgrounds.

- Students have good opportunities for relevant and interesting work-placements with a wide range of local small-, medium- and large-scale employers. Students recognise that this work experience is a valuable addition to their curriculum vitae and applications to higher education institutions.
- Employers support the programme well, ensuring, where possible, that students gain a good understanding of work through direct experience. Employers are directly engaged in the curriculum through events, competitions, challenges, talks and tours. The college has recently established 'employer champions' who help to develop college training programmes by suggesting areas that may be included in courses. The college has worked closely with employers and employer groups to create new courses in niche areas, such as fundamental aspects of electrical knowledge and the basics of care working. Some employers have been trained as assessors. The college celebrates the contribution and involvement of employers through an annual celebration and award ceremony.
- Some students subsequently gain paid work with their work-experience employer at the end of their course. Some employers offer preferred interview status for Uxbridge College students, or preferential rates for commercial services. For example, one employer offers students a website hosting service at a heavily discounted price.
- The college has successfully developed its own free-to-use, high-quality vacancy service on which employers can advertise their part-time and full-time vacancies, work experience, placements and voluntary work to college students. At the time of this visit the service held details of over 80 jobs.
- The college is a lead partner in shaping the borough's future strategic plans. It has a historically close working relationship with the local authority which has helped secure funding for local economic development projects. For example, it has made good use of funding to run well-targeted training programmes for local people wanting to work in the travel and tourism sector, in collaboration with hoteliers based near Heathrow airport.
- No areas for development were identified at this visit.

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

Nick Crombie
Her Majesty's Inspector