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Ms M Aslett  
Business Improvement Manager  
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Dear Ms Aslett

Ofsted 2009-10 survey inspection programme: good practice in apprenticeship training

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 9 November 2009 to look at good practice in apprenticeship training, with a particular focus on your Isle of Wight hospitality provision.

The visit provided valuable information that 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 included discussions with Isle of Wight learners, employers and key members of staff, and the observation of training. A range of documents, learners' files, portfolios and data were reviewed.

Features of good practice

- High-quality training delivered by skilled and professional staff contributes to the good skills developed by learners in the workplace.

Staff are very well-qualified and knowledgeable about the catering industry. There is a good range of clearly recorded continuing staff training. All staff complete basic teacher training qualifications and some staff have Certificates in Education. Learners develop good practical skills in the workplace. They benefit from the practical skills demonstrated to them, such as fish filleting and line cleaning for draught beer. There is good contextualisation of key skills to hospitality, helping learners' understanding and development by being related to vocational situations.

- Good support for learners which helps them focus on achieving their qualifications.

Learners receive good learning and pastoral support. Many learners require additional support with their literacy and numeracy, some are also dyslexic. They are initially assessed and receive good support from suitably qualified training advisers. Good personal support is provided for learners. This includes help and guidance on alcohol and drug awareness, financial support to purchase uniforms or clothes for interviews, help with travel costs and the purchase of books for learning. There is good reinforcement and support for *Every Child Matters* themes, which includes raising awareness of sexual health and healthy eating. Many learners felt they could not have progressed so well without this support.

- Good celebration of learners' success helping to improve self-esteem and the promotion of the hospitality industry to prospective learners.

There is good celebration of learners' success through a range of initiatives, such as a 'learner of the month' award, regular newsletters for learners and their employers featuring success stories and a prestigious annual awards ceremony. In particular, case studies of learners present role-models to prospective learners to help promote courses at employment events and local schools' careers fairs.

- Strong leadership and management which focus on employer engagement to support learner success.

Senior managers on the island set high standards for their staff and learners. There is a good range of supportive employers used across the island who are kept well informed of their learners' progress. Managers and staff on the island have regular dialogue with employers to ensure learners are safe and supported to achieve their qualifications. Learners are encouraged to move to other employers, if necessary, to complete units that are difficult to achieve in their own establishment, or when establishments shut for the winter. An informative and easy to understand employer pack helps to brief employers about the apprenticeship programme and their role in supporting learners to succeed. A good working relationship has been developed with local Connexions staff that benefits learners.

#### Areas for development

- Continue to focus on improving success rates across the provision and particularly the retention of apprentices.

Although success rates remain reasonably high for advanced apprentices, there was a slight decline in 2008/09. Apprenticeship success rates have remained broadly satisfactory since the previous inspection. The company has expanded its delivery of apprenticeships considerably across many areas of the country and the good practice of the Isle of Wight needs to be applied where senior managers have identified potential problems. Hospitality apprentices often leave their programme early due to a lack of awareness of the long unsociable working hours and conditions of employment in the industry. Staff have identified the need for improved initial advice and guidance to better prepare learners for the trade.

- Continue the good development in the use of technology to support learning.

A broad range of technology is used by staff to communicate with and support learners in the workplace. This includes the use of social network sites, text messages and email. Learners have started using the recently opened e-learning resource area on the company intranet. This site has a variety of learning materials and tests available and there are plans to expand this further.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop apprenticeship training in your organisation.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your 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

Neil Edwards  
Her Majesty's Inspector