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Mrs J Shopland-Reed  
Manager  
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Dear Mrs Shopland-Reed

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 4 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 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 four staff, four employers and 11 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 success rates for apprenticeships have remained consistently high and in 2008/09 were 86%, well above the national rate. Framework achievement for veterinary nursing is outstanding at 100%. Advanced apprentices achievement rates in 2008/09 were 100%.
- Employer links are particularly strong. LITE (Stockport) Ltd (LITE) ensures that employers develop a good understanding of the processes associated with the apprenticeship training programmes. Employers are actively involved in learners' training and development. Employers' contracts

identify clearly the roles of both the employer and training provider in the process. LITE has produced a particularly detailed employer handbook which they find very useful.

- Employer relationships are well maintained through very effective contact between the workplace supervisors and assessors, and LITE staff. Communication is frequent and effective, and is valued by employers. Employers can easily reach LITE staff to discuss any matters which affect learners and they receive prompt advice. Many employers receive good support and information to help them run their companies effectively.
- Veterinary nursing learners benefit from qualified in-house assessors, and many learners have individual workplace mentors who support their progression very effectively. LITE provides staff development workshops for the work-based assessors to improve assessment practice. These are well received by employers.
- Employers' involvement in planning individual training and assessment programmes for learners is good. Employers are used effectively to deliver a range of learning in the workplace. Learners receive a clear, coherent programme and action plans for on-the-job training, which are mapped to their National Vocational Qualification units and the off-the-job training. The training plans are used well to maximise the value of the workplace training.
- LITE works effectively with employers to develop learning programmes to meet learners' and employers' needs. It provides pre-entry training to enable learners who would otherwise struggle to gain entry to veterinary nursing training and succeed on the course. LITE introduced the customer service apprenticeship in response to requests from employers. It offers additional courses, such as first aid at work and assessor awards to learners, and makes participation in these available to employers. LITE consulted with employers in the development of the new framework in veterinary nursing.
- Learners benefit from the good use of additional activities to enhance learning. LITE arranges presentations and activities on specialist topics, such as equine physiotherapy and veterinary care, for learners and employers. They include visits from well-known staff from the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. Some employers use this as an opportunity for networking and for the sharing of good practice to benefit learners working in, for example, the livery and riding schools.
- Employers take an active part in learners' progress reviews. Regular meetings include workplace supervisors and their learners, and provide good opportunities to discuss learners' individual programmes. Learners' progress reviews are well documented and contribute well to their continuing development. The process is supported effectively by monthly records of attendance and reviews of progress provided by employers, and the termly reports produced by LITE staff on learners' progress and achievements in their off-the-job training.

## Areas for further development

- Maintain employer involvement in the planning, development and understanding of the new framework in veterinary nursing.

As I explained previously, 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

Linda Gallacher  
Additional Inspector