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Mr I Morgan
Principal
Warwickshire College
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Dear Mr Morgan

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 12 November 2009 to look at good practice in construction apprenticeship training.

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 learners, an employer and key members of staff, and analysis of key documentation.

Features of good practice

- The outstanding progression routes for learners encouraging progression to higher levels.

The college offers highly effective, seamless progression routes in construction from levels 1 to 3. Almost all learners enter the college programmes at level 1. There are very few direct entries at levels 2 or 3. Although figures vary from year-to-year, a significant number of level 1 learners has progressed to level 2 and then to level 3 programmes. Advanced apprentices in particular develop a strong and effective working relationship with college staff as they progress. Advanced apprentices are especially motivated and focused on career goals. They speak very highly of how the college has helped them to develop good craft skills as they have progressed through the programme. Success rates for 2008/09 are very high and substantially above national averages for both apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeships.

- The very good use of management information to encourage good overall and timely success.

Learners' progress is reviewed frequently. Tutors, assessors and employers share information effectively to identify how learners can best be supported to stay on target. The college uses a highly structured system to collect, collate and use a range of data about each learner. These data include information arising out of six-weekly reviews, site visits, quality meetings, an at-risk learner register, team meetings, monitoring by managers and a colour-coded progress monitoring system. The college's key focus is on timely achievement and timely success rates for 2008/09 are very high as almost all learners have achieved on time.

- The thorough systems for ensuring employers support their learners effectively to achieve.

The college has highly effective partnerships with employers, many of whom have supported apprenticeships for several years. College staff screen employers before any learner starts on the programme. Staff consider job roles and responsibilities, as well as wider learning opportunities, before agreeing to work with an employer. The college has designed their own 'skills scanning' tool to ensure an employer fully understands how it should help learners to achieve. The same thorough approach is also taken as learners progress to higher-level qualifications. The outcomes of the scan are used to plan effectively and to monitor learners' goals. Staff hold employers to account if there is any slippage in planned activities. Employers respond well and take their obligations seriously. Generally, learners stay on target and complete their qualifications in a timely manner.

- The highly effective strategy to successfully promote and deliver qualifications in construction.

The college has a well-planned and cohesive approach to marketing and delivering construction qualifications. Learners are first attracted to the college at the age of 14 through local community school liaison events. They are encouraged to attend an Introductory Certificate in Basic Construction Skills course as an effective industry taster. Learners that show the aptitude and desire to progress at 16 years of age are introduced to willing employers for work experience before they sign up for a full-time level 1 programme. Level 1 learners benefit from achieving their apprenticeship key skills before progressing to level 2. This gives them more time to concentrate on their specific craft skills and knowledge when they become apprentices. Some advanced apprentices first came to the college at 14 years of age and speak very warmly about the opportunities they have had and the difference it has made to their lives.

The college has invested significantly in people and physical resources. It has changed its structures and systems in the past three years to create greater emphasis on employer engagement and meeting individual learners' needs. Programmes are sufficiently flexible to respond to learners' and employers' changing circumstances. Assessment practice has become more streamlined

and efficient. Overall, the college is managing the challenge of maintaining very good success rates effectively. It recognises that firm strategic planning, long-term commitment, appropriate investment and an approach that challenges the status quo are key tools for continued success.

Areas for development

No significant areas for development were identified during this visit.

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

Kevin Culver
Additional Inspector