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Ms F McMillan
Principal
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Dear Ms McMillan

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 3 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.

This visit focused on work the college has done, with employers, to develop and design its curriculum in response to employers' needs. The evidence used to inform the judgements included interviews with a wide range of staff and four employers, and investigation of the examples of good practice provided. A small sample of documents and data were also reviewed.

I agreed to provide a summary of the good practice seen and to identify any areas for development and outline the main findings below.

The main strengths

- Success rates are high in the curriculum areas examined on this visit and, where national rates exist, have been consistently above these rates over recent years. The college has been successful in promoting provision to the local community and in increasing the rate at which students remain in education and training at the age of 16, to 95%.
- College leaders have established a clearly focused vision for the college and its role in the community, directed at meeting the learning needs of

students and employers. Leadership is strong and highly successful at communicating this vision and in motivating staff to ensure it is realised. This communication is underpinned with good encouragement and support for staff to generate ideas, lead initiatives, or recommend proposals for working with employers to develop the curriculum to meet their needs. The college's business development team is an integral part of the work of the college. It makes a strong contribution to, and provides good support for, the work of curriculum teams in the development of commercial and publicly funded provision.

- Staff have a particularly good understanding of their individual roles and contribution to curriculum development in response to employers' needs. Team working is good, with a responsive, 'can do' approach. Staff value the development opportunities associated with working with employers, which help to keep them up to date with developments in a range of industry sectors.
- Curriculum managers have made good use of the college's links with employers to extend the curriculum to include learners who might not otherwise have access to accredited training and to provide progression opportunities for learners. These developments also meet employers' training needs successfully. Managers use links with employers effectively to improve learners' ability to apply their learning at work and their understanding of the work opportunities available to them.
- Partnership working with employers is good. The college is not only open and responsive in its working relationships with employers, it is also clear about its expectations of employers and of what it can provide or develop to meet their needs. It makes good use of its expertise in teaching and learning and of employers' technical and industrial expertise. It works closely with employers to develop programmes that meet learners' and employers' needs successfully.
- The college has good links with sector skills councils and other industry bodies and is effective in contributing to the development of national awards or influencing their content to ensure that they meet employers' and learners' needs. It makes good use of labour market information and links with regional stakeholders to anticipate demand and target resources for development of provision.
- No areas for further development were identified during this visit.

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

Penny Horner
Her Majesty's Inspector