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Ms K Passant  
Principal  
Runshaw College  
Langdale Road  
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Dear Ms Passant

**Ofsted 2010–11 good practice survey inspection programme:  
improving science in colleges**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and learners, during my visit between 14 and 16 March 2011 as part of our survey in science.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to a national report. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributors or contributing institutions but individuals and institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence base included: meetings with students, teachers and technical staff and managers; observation of six lessons; analysis of documentation and students' work; and a tour of the science department.

**Features of good practice**

- Effective teaching and learning in science are characterised by detailed planning. A wide range of activities in lessons is supported by good resources. Staff use humour and enthusiasm well to enliven their lessons. Very strong working relationships between staff and students are clearly valued by students. There is a good balance of stretch and challenge in lessons. Students are learning well and making at least good and often better progress in lessons. Teachers use questions well to check learning and to stimulate debate and discussion among students. Students work well with their peers in small groups and pairs. Natural questioning from students is used well by teachers to extend discussions and help understanding. Accurate assessment of students' work generally gives clear feedback on how to raise their standards. The focus on examination techniques is unobtrusive, but relentless, where appropriate.

- Standards of students' work and success are very high. Retention rates, pass rates and value-added scores are high across almost all science subjects and courses.
- Most science students progress to continue studying science at a wide range of universities.
- The recruitment to science is very high and rising.
- Leadership and management are very effective. This is exemplified by the high-quality team work that creates the effective teaching and learning approaches observed and the jointly devised and shared resources. Staff provide help and support to each other. Ultimately, this leads to the high standards of students' work and success.
- The technical support for science subjects is excellent. Laboratories are well used by large numbers of students and are well maintained and set up for practical work. The technical staff are full members of the science team and make a very strong contribution to the work in science.
- Well-qualified staff are carefully selected and recruited. Staff are well supported in their development through appropriate performance reviews and continuing professional development to keep up to date and extend their teaching expertise.
- There are clear, open and accurate approaches to self-assessment. This is especially strong in the evaluation of the standards of teaching and learning which focuses clearly on learning. Lesson observations during the inspection confirmed the college's analysis of the quality of teaching and learning.
- Students value the experiences they have in science. They are clearly enthused by their teachers in lessons and respond well to the teaching they receive.
- An extensive enrichment programme for science students is helping them to raise their sights and reach for careers they may not have expected to enter. Students are very appreciative of the enrichment opportunities they are offered.
- There is high-quality additional support for students, both in terms of carefully planned tutorial programmes and additional subject help when needed.
- A very good range of science courses, including GCE AS and A level, vocational science, Access and foundation degree programmes is available.

**Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- devising and implementing effective strategies to raise success rates on the GCSE science programme to their previously high level.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop science provision.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to the relevant funding bodies and will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection.

Yours sincerely

**Wilf Hudson**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**