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Mr Neil Hopkins
Principal
Peter Symonds College
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Dear Mr Hopkins

Ofsted inspection of ITE provision leading to Awarding Body qualifications in the lifelong learning/further education sector

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your provision in the week beginning 16 January 2012. Please pass my thanks on to your staff for the time they gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which they provided before and during the inspection.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and to a published national overview report. This report will identify the overall quality of provision leading to Awarding Body qualifications and identify the overall strengths and areas for development. However, in line with previous practice, inspectors will not make graded judgements of the quality of the provision in each centre; they will evaluate and feed back identified strengths and any points for further development. These are outlined below for your centre.

The published overview report will list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text.

Outcomes for trainees

Each year Peter Symonds recruits around ten trainees to follow its City and Guilds Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS) course following completion of a Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS) course. Trainees follow the first year of a DTLLS programme before transferring onto a University of Greenwich professional graduate certificate in education (PGCE) course. On completion of their PGCE they also receive full DTLLS accreditation from City and Guilds.

Retention and pass rates are high on the first year of the DTLLS programme. Around two thirds go on to successfully complete the full DTLLS and PGCE which is in line with the national average. The proportion successfully completing the full teaching qualification shows a trend of continuing improvement over the last few years. Trainees are carefully selected for the ability and aptitude to complete the course. Careful attention is given to making sure that courses match trainees roles well and take full account of future career and professional development aspirations. The college provides very clear progression routes starting with PTLLS and culminating with the PGCE programme at the University of Greenwich.

Most trainees start the course after securing a teaching role in their specialist field. The course effectively develops their understanding of the theory of teaching and helps them to reflect on and assess the progress of their learners. The majority are employed at Peter Symonds and make a significant contribution to learners' progress both during and after their training.

The key strengths are:

- very high success rates on the first year of the programme
- an experienced and knowledgeable team of tutors who provide high quality central training which is much enjoyed by trainees
- the way training, lesson feedback and tutorials combine to help trainees reflect on how effectively they have put the theory learnt into practice
- the high quality of personal support for trainees by tutors who know their trainees very well
- the way in which feedback to trainees on their teaching is very encouraging, good on identifying strengths and building confidence
- feedback on assignments is good and provides a clear indication of how the assessment criteria are met and how to improve
- self-assessment is rigorous and usefully follows the format of the common inspection framework; trainees are fully involved in the process bringing real benefit to course development
- all trainees undertake a behaviour management module which they report as a very valuable aspects of their training
- clear progression routes are available from preparing to teach through to a full teaching qualification and on to professional formation
- trainees' extensive and up-to-date knowledge of their specialist subject area
- excellent communication between the college and its partners to support trainees and develop bespoke courses to suit the needs of employers and facilitate transition to a full teaching qualification.

The key areas for development are:

- sharpening initial needs analysis and rigorously monitoring individual trainee's progress against clear expectations and setting challenging developmental targets
- identifying the trainees whose teaching is limited to a narrow range of learners and develop opportunities to broaden their experience
- further embed the roles and responsibilities of the subject mentor, identified in the new mentor handbook, for providing subject specific input to training and involvement in evaluation and development of the training.

As explained in the inspection guidance, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next inspection.

Yours sincerely

Peter Gale

Her Majesty's Inspector