

08 November 2006

Ms Teresa Kelly  
Principal  
Abingdon and Witney College  
Wootton Road  
Abingdon  
OX14 1GG

Dear Ms Kelly

Ofsted Subject and Survey Inspection Programme 2006-07

Sector Subject Area 15: Business, Administration and Law

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on 30 and 31 October 2006. I am particularly grateful to your staff for all their hard work in preparing the programme and background documentation and giving up a great deal of their time during the visit. Please pass on my thanks to those learners who gave up their time to talk to me.

The visit provided much useful evidence for the good practice survey in business and administration. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions, but should we wish to cite specific aspects of practice we will contact the college first.

The evidence used to inform judgements included: interviews with staff and learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of learners' work and observation of four lessons.

I agreed to provide a summary of my observations of good practice seen in business and to suggest some areas for development.

Good practice observed

- Success rates on Association of Accountancy Technicians (AAT) NVQ courses are consistently high compared to the national benchmarks. On the BTEC National Diploma Business in 2005/06 success rates were well above average.
- Lessons are very well planned with clear objectives that are understood by learners. Teachers structure lessons well and short, timed activities help to determine a good pace to lessons.

- In lessons teachers make very good use of learners' experiences both from the world of work and as consumers. A variety of learning activities are used well to engage learners and to take into account their different ways of learning.
- Teachers have expert subject knowledge. Staff development is effective in enabling teachers to maintain technical currency in their subject and to share good practice in teaching and learning.
- Teachers have very good rapport with learners and provide positive and supportive feedback on performance in lessons.
- Teachers' marking is very detailed. Feedback on learners' work is of consistently high quality; this leaves learners in no doubt about how well they have done against the criteria and where improvement is needed.
- There is a broad based range of courses with clear progression routes. Additional qualifications in customer care, selling and conflict handling enhance work-readiness.
- The pastoral and academic review process is effective and monitors progress regularly across all aspects of learners' experience in the college. The support and approachability of teachers is particularly valued by learners.
- Employer engagement is well developed and has led to the college winning the Action for Business 'kite mark' in 2006. The college provides highly effective, flexible and responsive training for employers using both certificated qualifications and customised courses.

#### Areas for development:

- develop further the use of information learning technology in classroom-based learning activities
- for A-level business subjects improve further the progress of learners in relation to their GCSE grades on entry
- improve the proportion of learners achieving higher grades at A-level and on BTEC National Diploma
- develop further the involvement of employers in the delivery and assessment of AS, A-level and BTEC Diploma curriculum.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop business courses in the college.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your LLSC and will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of the half-term following the inspection. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Russell Jordan  
Her Majesty's Inspector