

08 March 2007

Mr Gary Groom  
Principal  
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Dear Mr Groom

Ofsted Subject Survey Inspection Programme 2006/07

Sector Skills Area 5 – Construction

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on 22 and 23 January 2007. I am particularly grateful to you and all your staff for the hard work that took place to prepare for the visit and for giving up a great deal of time during the visit to meet with me. Please pass on my thanks to all those concerned.

This visit is part of a series to provision in SSA 5 graded good or better at its most recent inspection, in order to evaluate how good practice has been brought about, further improved and sustained. The visit provided much useful evidence for the good practice survey in construction. 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. All letters, following survey visits, will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: lesson observations; interviews with staff and learners; scrutiny of the examples of good practice provided including a tour of resources. I agreed to provide a summary of the observations of good practice seen and to suggest some areas for development.

Good practice observed

- The well planned teaching. Teaching is planned to ensure learner engagement and participation. Learners enjoy being actively involved in learning and in these lessons they make good progress.
- The good opportunities for participation in skill competitions. Learners are able to enter local, regional and national competitions to demonstrate the good standard of practical skills they have developed.

These competitions encourage and motivate learners and the college has a culture of celebrating successes at awards ceremonies.

- The good arrangements to access sponsorship and employer support. Learners benefit from a range of sponsorship items that enhance curriculum delivery and from a number of visits that enable learners to develop further their knowledge and understanding.
- The extensive range of provision for 14-16 year olds. This enables pupils from local schools to experience construction education and training and supports progression onto post-16 courses and into related employment.
- The good progression opportunities provided for full-time students. A pilot programme is being developed with the construction industry training board (CITB) and some major employers to enable full time students who have completed an Intermediate Construction Award to progress onto an apprenticeships programme. This enables full-time learners to put into practice at work the technical skills and knowledge they have gained within the college.
- The good response to meeting the training and assessment needs of experienced adult workers. The college, through Train to Gain provision has enabled experienced workers access to supported training and assessment opportunities to enable them to gain recognised qualifications.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- to address the low retention rates on many programmes, particularly at level three and for adult learners
- to improve the access and use of accurate and reliable data on learner performance for use in the evaluation of programmes.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop construction provision in the college.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your LLSC. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Fraser  
Additional Inspector