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Mr Des Lambert
Principal
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Dear Mr Lambert

Ofsted Subject Survey Programme 2006/07

Sector Skills Area 3: Agriculture, horticulture and animal care

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on 10 November 2006. I am particularly grateful to you and all 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 also pass on my thanks to all the staff and learners who gave up their time to talk to me.

The visit provided much useful evidence for the good practice subject survey in agriculture, horticulture and animal care. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but should we wish to include specific aspects of practice we will contact the college first. All college letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform judgements included: interviews with staff and learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of good practice examples.

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

Good practice observed included:

- very good team teaching in key skills using vocational teachers supported by key skills specialists to provide interesting and lively key skills sessions, carefully related to real projects being carried out by

students and using highly effective differentiation to ensure that teaching meets students' needs

- particularly effective attention to developing students' understanding of, and use of, technical language in all areas of the curriculum through effective use of teachers as good role models constantly using language of an appropriate technical level for the particular group they are teaching and making great effort to extend and develop the students' technical vocabulary
- the use of small group sizes, even for theory lessons, to help teachers pay close attention to keeping all students actively engaged in their work including constantly refocusing students on the task in hand and challenging inappropriate behaviour as required
- clear roles and responsibilities for developing teaching and learning including for supporting new teachers
- thorough lesson preparation which allows teachers to set classes off promptly on interesting and lively exercises and then manage and direct the learning productively
- the use of strong land-based industry links, including a high level of consultation, resulting in producing well trained staff as a commodity for land-based industries
- very frequent and enthusiastic celebration of student and staff success fostering high self esteem, including in 14-16 increased flexibility programmes
- a high emphasis on inclusivity, and on enabling students to reach their potential including using flexible timetabling and altering daily starting times where difficulties with transport to the campus exist to promote easy access to courses.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- a need to continue to develop effective mechanisms for the sharing of good practice throughout the college and across curriculum areas.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop land-based 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. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Jo Parkman
ALI