

24 January 2007

Dr David Collins  
Principal  
South Cheshire College  
Dane Bank Ave  
Crewe  
Cheshire  
CW2 8AB

Dear Dr Collins

Ofsted Subject and Survey Inspection Programme 2006/07

Sector Skills Area 04– Engineering and manufacturing technology

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on the 04 and 05 of January. I am particularly grateful to teaching and other 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 staff and students who gave up their time to talk to me.

The visit provided much useful evidence for the good practice survey. 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. College letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term and copied to the LSC. The letters will also be available to the next inspection team to visit the college and to inform your AAV visits.

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

I have provided below a summary of my observations, the good practice seen and suggested areas for development.

#### Good practice observed

- Adult learner success rates at level 1 and level 3 are high, particularly so in 2006.
- Success rates for learners aged 16-18 on level 2 courses were high in 2006.
- Very high attendance rates across engineering, averaging 94 % in 2006.

- Very good online attendance monitoring, easily accessible by staff and students. Learners report the highly visible attendance reporting mechanisms have motivated them to prepare individual improvement plans to improve their own attendance and punctuality.
- The lessons observed were of good quality.
- Strengths included:
  - enthusiastic and knowledgeable teachers who planned their teaching carefully; they have a good rapport with learners, teach at an appropriate pace to all learners and use specialist knowledge well to interest and motivate the learners who respond positively to the teaching
  - the lessons were well structured and included an appropriate variety of learning activity, making teaching interesting and promoting learning; handouts were of good quality and demonstrations were used to good effect in practical classes.
- There are particularly strong links with larger employers locally. The department responds well to employers' needs by offering flexible and bespoke provision. These links help to develop and maintain the resource base through donations of equipment and specialist lecturers from major employers. The college also maintains good links with a specialist work-based learning provider.
- Very good support for learners. This starts at pre-entry taster days and schools visits and continues throughout the learner journey encompassing recruitment, initial assessment of basic skills, assessment of practical competence, induction, the monitoring of learners progress and additional support. Very close attention is given to learners at risk of not succeeding through, for example, the early identification of learning and support needs, close monitoring of progress and reporting to employers and/or parents as appropriate. Good links with local schools allow early access to information about learners likely support needs. Support arrangements include drop-in and in-class support.

Areas for development, which were discussed in my verbal feedback, include:

- more individual detail in some lesson plans. Lesson plans lack sufficient detail on activities planned for individuals and differentiation strategies available
- better use of targets at reviews
- cramped workshop accommodation.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop engineering and manufacturing courses.

Yours sincerely

Bob Busby  
ALI