

08 March 2007

Dr Jette Burford
Principal
Hugh Baird College
Balliol Road
Bootle
Liverpool
L20 7EW

Dear Dr Burford

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 28 February. I am particularly grateful to the floristry teaching team 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 other 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; lessons observations; scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of good practice examples.

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

Good practice observed included:

- effective strategies to increase the number of 16 to 18 year old learners on floristry courses
- effective actions to improve retention including improved advice and guidance about the specific nature of floristry courses, comprehensive interview arrangements and the use of open days and taster sessions
- successful strategies to improve the success rate on apprenticeship courses

- good integration of key skill study into vocational teaching with improving and above average success rates in the key skill subject of communications
- the use of a well-established system for measuring each learners' progress in relation to their prior attainment to motivate and support learners to realise their full potential
- high standards of floristry work, showing creativity and good use of colour
- the use of effective learner-centred teaching approaches which are productive and ensure that the level of challenge matches each learner's needs
- imaginative approaches to the use of high quality learning resources and in teaching methods
- good use of information and learning technology in learning including for presentations, internet research work and through a well-populated, useful intranet site
- very good use of the 'Secret Garden' floristry shop in the college reception area to give learners excellent opportunities to gain skills in customer care and experience of the commercial operation of a floristry shop as well as build confidence and improve communication skills
- a well-established, comprehensive tutorial system including very detailed coverage of a wide range of important topics covering aspects of health, safety and personal development
- a rigorous lesson observation scheme that is well used to promote improvement and to encourage the sharing of good practice
- a full and active team of advanced teaching practitioners who ensure good practice is shared well both within teaching teams but also across the college and who promote the use of new ideas in teaching and learning effectively.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- the promotion of the principles of environmental sustainability both within the floristry curriculum and the department.

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

Philippa Francis
Her Majesty's Inspector