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Mr M McCarthy
Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality
North East Worcestershire College
Blackwood Road
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Worcestershire
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Dear Mr McCarthy

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Learning Outside the Classroom (LOTC)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 12 November 2007 to look at the way that learning outside the classroom contributes to your college's curriculum and to learners' achievement and personal development.

Thank you for organising my day and the time you gave me during my visit to identify good practice and areas for improvement, outlined below. I very much appreciated the discussions I had with yourself and the principal, senior staff, learners and the access you gave me to relevant documentation and teaching sessions.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text. All feedback letters are published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

Good practice identified included:

- Local schools are able to use the college's facilities for learning outside the classroom. School pupils are able to participate in a number of programmes, including foundation and level 1 programmes, and Young Apprenticeships.
- The college organises a number of conferences for schools including a day Sci-Tech conference, in collaboration with industrialists. There is also an AS level psychology conference including presentations from industry and higher education creative workshops for sixth form students, who spend a day in college obtaining a better understanding of creative industries including fine art, graphics, media, music and theatre.

- College students provide learning outside the classroom opportunities for schools. For example, a production created in 2006, tied into a national campaign in schools, tackled the issue of cannabis use. The touring production reached an estimated 2600 pupils with health messages about the risks associated with cannabis use and how to make safe decisions. A creative careers road show bus toured 12 schools to provide information and understanding of creative arts careers for students and parents.
- Learners on childcare programmes plan and undertake risk assessments of learning outside the classroom activities to prepare them for organising trips and visits for children in their care.
- During their weekly placements in childcare settings, learners frequently support local schools by accompanying children on organised trips.
- All heads of school have learning outside the classroom budgets and in some courses it is built into fees.
- The college's risk assessments of all trips and visits are monitored by the health and safety officer and agreed by the principal. The risk assessment procedure is clear and the documentation is easy to use. The college is confident that it can manage risk and there is a positive attitude to any proposed learning outside the classroom activity. The officer also provides this service at another college and has helped local schools with their risk assessments of residential visits.
- Learning outside the classroom is referred to in some subject sector student handbooks, where the activities are explained in terms of their importance to programme and learning outcomes.

Areas for development which we discussed included:

- there is no systematic collection of evidence to measure the impact of learning outside the classroom on achievement or personal development and well-being in subject sector areas
- learners' access to enrichment activities varies depending on which campus they are located.

A copy of this letter will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Bob Hamp
Her Majesty's Inspector