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Mr P Swift
Principal
South Cheshire College
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Dear Mr Swift

Ofsted subject survey: good practice in promoting equality

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff during my visit on 29 January 2009 to look at success factors in promoting equality and improving the outcomes for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners from migrant communities.

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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included meetings with college staff, meetings with students, lesson observations and scrutiny of documentation.

The quality of provision to promote equalities for ESOL learners from the migrant community is outstanding.

Features of good practice and success factors observed

Strong leadership and management to embed equality and diversity into the curriculum and the wider community

- Strong leadership and management within the college includes partnerships with external partners such as the Bentley factory, who are tentatively engaging with the college for ESOL programmes, and the police liaison project for hate crime reporting. The college follow the mission vision and values they have defined. The strong commitment to equality and diversity and the 'living of the values' are included in the values of the college. Equality and diversity is embedded into the curriculum and the learners help to shape equality

and diversity within the college and the wider community. Staff training in equality and diversity is mandatory and there is a good range of continuing professional development opportunities. The Director of Organisational Development has a cross-college role and works closely with the equality and diversity co-ordinator. The equality forum at the college includes representatives from curriculum areas, managers, student council equality and diversity officers, community representatives such as the NHS Trust, the Police and the citizens' advice bureau. Meetings are held regularly and are well minuted. The college is an active member of the equality and diversity group for Cheshire and Warrington that has been set up by the Learning and Skills Council. The college is running workshops for the equality and diversity group for the single equality scheme. This is being developed through a consortium approach.

Excellent use of and analysis of data

- Data are regularly collected to monitor the progress of ESOL learners. Current in-year retention for 2008/2009 stands at 97.7%, which is comparable to retention for the previous three years. Actions have been put in place to improve this such as drop-in sessions for learners and tentative work with Bentley. Regular analysis of data is conducted with action plans in place to improve outcomes for learners. Success rates on ESOL programmes for 2007/2008 were 71% against an overall college success rate of 78%. Progression routes for learners are carefully monitored. Of the ESOL learners completing their programmes in 2007/2008, 95% have progressed onto a higher level ESOL programme, a course at the college or into employment.

The personalised curriculum for ESOL learners

- The curriculum is clearly focused on meeting the individual needs of learners. The learners have individual learning plans that are regularly reviewed at tutorial. Learners are able to plan their own timetables with teachers. Courses are available on a full-time, part-time and evening basis and include drop in sessions. Learners can also choose from a number of ESOL programmes combined with vocational options, for example, ESOL with childcare and ESOL with painting and decorating. Although the introduction of these programmes is a relatively new addition to the curriculum, there are already positive outcomes for learners. They feel that they are better able to care for their own children after studying on the ESOL with childcare programme. Citizenship features highly on the programmes and the learners appreciate the greater understanding they have of British culture.

Outstanding teaching and learning on ESOL programmes

- All teaching and learning resources are screened to ensure that they are anti-discriminatory and used with a purpose. A range of strategies are used that reflect anti-discriminatory practice. Opportunities are provided during lessons for learners to explore vocabulary/terminology and compare their own culture to British culture, including topics relating to discrimination. The observation of teaching and learning programme has a very strong equality and diversity ethos, and 89% of lessons across the college are graded good or better.

The effective enrichment programme in promoting positive outcomes

- The college has an extensive enrichment programme that effectively covers equality and diversity. A comprehensive schedule of events is planned each year and includes staff, learner and community led events, for example the holocaust exhibition held at the college. These events link into the curriculum rather than being stand-alone activities. The college also holds a yearly 'Live in Harmony' equality and diversity competition for learners. There is also an end of year show for learners to promote equality and diversity in the college and the wider community. Specific enrichment for ESOL learners includes day trips and residential to gain a better understanding of British culture.

The excellent collaboration with external partners

- The college has been working with the police liaison project since 2005 when there was an influx of Polish migrants to Crewe. There were a number of hate crimes against the migrant community and the college became involved in the project to report hate crime. The college now has a dedicated team of hate crime reporters. The college is also actively involved in the ESOL for schools project. Five high schools are involved in the project for Year 10 and 11 pupils. Intensive English classes with pupils supported high levels of success in 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 when learners who had predicted grades of U were able to attain C grades at GCSE. Primary College activities bring primary school children to the college for 'fun' activities and to provide them with a taste of college life.

Effective reviews with learners

- ESOL learners are well supported through the review process. Reviews are regular and provide high levels of support for learners. The electronic review forms allow teachers to carefully monitor learner progress and to set and review targets. The reviews are a mix of pastoral and curriculum. The teachers know the learners well and the review sessions are relaxed with plenty of opportunities for the

learners to feedback on their own progress. The individual learning plans (ILP) are also reviewed at this time and the ILPs are personalised to ESOL learners, containing many visual prompts. Progression and achievements are tracked at the review and challenges for learners are explored. Teachers are well prepared for the review and have collated information from all staff involved in the delivery of the curriculum.

Areas for development

Although no significant areas for development were identified, the college should continue to develop its tentative links with the Bentley factory to provide ESOL support to the migrant community and interns at the factory

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop promoting equalities in the college.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local LSC and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Anita Pyrkotsch-Jones
Additional Inspector