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Mr F McLoughlin
Principal
City and Islington College
Marlborough Building
383 Holloway Road
London
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Dear Mr McLoughlin

**Ofsted 2010–11 good practice survey inspection programme:
improving science in colleges**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 2 and 3 March 2011 as part of our good practice science survey.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to a national report. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributors or contributing institutions, but individuals and institutions will not be identified in the main text without your agreement.

The evidence base included: six lesson observations; meetings with senior and curriculum managers, science staff and science students; a tour of your science facilities; and scrutiny of students' outcomes and other documentation.

Features of good practice

- Outcomes for science students are very good. Success rates for all GCE A-level science subjects, and most vocational science programmes, are above national figures.
- Students generally achieve what is expected of them based on their previous attainment, with high value-added performance in A-level biology and physics.
- Progression rates for students are very high. Over three quarters of A-level science students progressed to higher education in 2010, many joining prestigious universities. Students make excellent progression from foundation level to intermediate level and advanced level science courses.

- Science students have high attendance rates and are punctual to lessons.
- Teaching and learning is of a very high quality, with all lessons observed in this visit judged to be good or outstanding.
- Innovative and high-quality use is made of information and learning technologies (ILT), including the effective use of data logging in experimental work.
- Enthusiastic and skilled technical staff support students and teachers very well by assisting with practical work in laboratories, as well as preparing and clearing resources.
- Assessment of the progress of students is good during lessons and through the regular setting and marking of homework.
- A very broad range of science provision encompasses many branches of pure and applied science, from foundation level to undergraduate programmes.
- Excellent partnership work with a broad range of partners, particularly local schools and universities, raises the profile and prestige of science.
- A very broad range of enrichment activities enlivens the curriculum for science students and enables them to extend their knowledge of applied and vocational science.
- Leadership and management are very effective. This has successfully raised the standards of science students, developed the curriculum well and raised the profile of science work to enable the college to become a regional centre of excellence for science provision.
- Managers have a thoughtful approach to problems, focusing on finding solutions, and a good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject through rigorous self-assessment procedures.
- Science staff have extensive specialist knowledge and receive good training to develop further their teaching and science skills, including very effective use of Science Learning Centres and strong links with professional bodies and science institutes.
- Science accommodation consists of well-appointed laboratories with a wide range of general and specialist facilities and high-quality ILT equipment.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the performance of sixth-form students of Caribbean heritage who have had low and decreasing success rates for the past three years
- increasing the sharing of good practice between scientists working in the college's Centre for Applied Science and the sixth form college
- providing additional accommodation to allow more science students to be enrolled at the college.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop your science provision.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to the relevant funding bodies and will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection.

Yours sincerely

Tony Noonan
Her Majesty's Inspector