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17 December 2010

Mr T Hicks  
Head of Learning and Skills  
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Dear Mr Hicks

**Ofsted 2010–11 survey inspection programmes: numeracy–tackling the challenge of ensuring that young people and adults gain the numeracy skills they need for their careers and personal lives**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 15 October 2010 to look at your work in numeracy.

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 included: interviews with prison staff, staff of Kensington and Chelsea College, which holds the contract to provide learning and skills, and learners; scrutiny of relevant documents; observation of four learning sessions in numeracy; and visits to work sites and vocational workshops.

Overall, HMYOI Feltham is satisfactory at tackling the challenge of ensuring that young people and adults gain the numeracy skills they need for their careers and personal lives.

**Key findings**

- College and prison managers have worked well to improve the provision in numeracy. In particular, the college's self-assessment report for Skills for Life is thorough and appropriate. However, significant staff issues, such as sickness and slow recruitment to vacant posts, have hampered many of the planned developments. Successful recent initiatives include the restructuring of the provision to provide teaching and learning in numeracy in the context of catering and music, in preparation for the implementation of functional skills. The offender management unit carries out an assessment of young people's basic needs in financial

management, but the range of programmes in learning and skills does not currently offer sufficient opportunities for them to improve their skills in budgeting and time management and financial literacy.

- The arrangements for initial assessment of the young people's numeracy skills is satisfactory and the prison has plans to introduce a more in-depth and reliable assessment. The proportion of young people assessed at numeracy below level 1 is high, at approximately 56%. However, the prison and college staff do not use data effectively to measure how well the learning and skills provision is meeting this identified need. They currently rely on the number of qualifications achieved and pass rates to measure performance against agreed targets. The college has recently introduced a more detailed management information system.
- The provision known as the Phoenix Centre provides good individual support and care to juveniles who have significant barriers to learning. Learners make good progress in developing their confidence in practising relevant skills, including numeracy. However, not enough juveniles receive individual support in classes. Two learning support assistants and a team of volunteer tutors provide individual support to young adults, but the college does not evaluate sufficiently the impact of this work on meeting the learners' needs.
- The teaching staff work well in teams and staff training is satisfactory. However, managers often rely on one-off training sessions on specific topics, and they do not follow up how well staff are able to use the knowledge or skills in their teaching. Not all staff have appropriate qualifications in teaching numeracy and they receive insufficient opportunities to share practice within and across teams or through links with other prisons and other college staff teaching numeracy or mathematics.
- The teaching and learning in numeracy observed during the visit varied from particularly effective with interesting learning activities to episodes where the activities motivated few learners to participate enthusiastically to practise and develop their skills. The better features of the sessions included good use of vocational contexts to teach practical numeracy skills alongside mathematical concepts. The learners on construction programmes developed good numeracy skills through vocational projects. However, the environment in the classroom was not conducive to learning. In the less effective sessions, the teachers relied too much on paper-based activities with insufficient use of practical skills to motivate learners. Most tutors did not develop learners' independence in tackling numerical problems. They tended to give too much guidance at the start of activities, without allowing learners to work out the best way forward, either individually or in small groups.
- Overall, pass rates for the adult certificate in numeracy are low, especially at level 2; but in 2010, they improved at level 1. Learners develop good practical numeracy skills and those interviewed said they had significantly increased their confidence in carrying out tasks using basic skills that had previously baffled them.

**Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- continuing to implement action plans to develop the provision and ensuring that the revised curriculum provides all learners with low levels of numeracy with the opportunity to improve their skills, including skills in everyday financial and time management
- continuing to increase the use of data to evaluate how well the provision is helping the large numbers of learners with low levels of numeracy to improve their skills and gain a qualification
- ensuring that prison and college staff work with relevant partners to manage the deployment of volunteer tutors and learning support assistants to maximise the individual support that learners receive and evaluate the effectiveness of this work
- providing greater opportunities for staff and volunteer tutors to share good practice and develop expertise in teaching numeracy, particularly in helping learners to be more independent in tackling problems and in understanding mathematical concepts

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop numeracy at HMYOI Feltham.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. A copy of this letter will be sent to the Skills Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

**Karen Adriaanse**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**