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Ms E Piotrowska
Principal
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Dear Ms Piotrowska

Ofsted 2010–11 survey inspection programme: 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 27 and 28 September 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 senior staff, tutors and learners; five observations of teaching and learning sessions in numeracy; and a review of the supporting documents that you provided.

Overall, Morley College 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

- Numeracy provision is a small proportion of the college's work, accounting for just over 1% of the learners. Senior managers realised last year that it required a stronger management focus to raise the standards of numeracy provision. As a result, the strategy for improvement fully acknowledges the weaknesses in outcomes for learners and the key aspects of the quality of provision that need improving. However, it is too soon to measure the impact of the improvement measures introduced.
- Staff have a good understanding of the local community and the complex issues facing many learners, and they gauge the local demand for numeracy programmes well. Staff have established close relations with local community organisations and other training and educational

institutions, and they have widened participation successfully in their numeracy provision by recruiting many learners with high levels of need.

- The college offers a broad range of numeracy programmes which cover entry level and levels 1 and 2. Most numeracy provision in the college is part of access to higher education programmes. Managers analyse enrolment trends thoroughly to determine learners' preferred attendance patterns and the level of numeracy programmes required. In 2008/09, the college introduced entry level courses to meet this identified demand. The college also runs a few courses targeted at specific groups of learners, such as the fast-track programme for learners who want to work for the Police.
- Managers are planning to introduce more flexibility to the length of individual programmes, so that learners can take their final numeracy assessment when they are ready. Currently, learners do not take final numeracy assessments online.
- Additional learning support plays an important role in improving the performance of students who require numeracy skills to complete their main programme of learning. All learners receiving such support in 2009/10 completed their course. However, the number of learners receiving additional support for numeracy is very low.
- Teaching and learning were satisfactory in most of the numeracy lessons observed during the visit. Teachers empathised well with learners and focused appropriately on putting mathematics into everyday contexts. Learners interviewed valued this informal approach, often contrasting this favourably with their previous experience of learning mathematics. However, teachers did not monitor learners' progress sufficiently in lessons. In the weaker lessons, teachers did not support all learners to contribute to group discussions and some teaching was not sufficiently stimulating.
- Staff are well qualified, with teaching qualifications and appropriate mathematical experience. Sufficient teachers have specialist numeracy qualifications, but staff teaching numeracy do not have enough opportunities to share good practice in teaching and learning. Teachers do not use a wide enough range of resources, including information and learning technology, and the college's virtual learning environment is underdeveloped.
- Success rates for learners taking numeracy courses as part of access to higher education programmes were high in 2008/09. They were also high for the small number of learners taking GCSE mathematics at A* to C levels in 2009/10. The overall results for adult certificate in numeracy courses have dropped since 2007/08. In 2009/10 success rates were low at 52%, with low retention rates.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- introducing more flexible teaching and assessment opportunities, allowing learners to take their final assessment when they are ready, including online final assessments where appropriate

- reviewing the procedures to identify additional learning support in numeracy with a view to increasing the number of learners benefiting from this support
- ensuring that teachers focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning in numeracy through greater sharing of good practice and better use of learning resources, including information and learning technology
- ensuring that learners are aware of their commitment to completing their programmes and that they receive the ongoing support and feedback on their progress to help them stay on their programmes and attain the qualifications.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop numeracy at Morley College.

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 your local authority and the Skills Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

Tony Noonan
Her Majesty's Inspector