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Mr M Neville  
Head of Adult Education Service  
Derbyshire County Council  
Chatsworth Hall  
Chesterfield Road  
Matlock  
DE4 3FW

Dear Mr Neville

**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 11 and 12 November 2010 to look at 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 staff and learners; scrutiny of relevant documents; analysis of learners' work; and observation of five lessons.

Overall, Derbyshire County Council Adult Education Service 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**

- The range of numeracy programmes is good and meets learners' needs effectively. Numeracy programmes account for a substantial proportion of the Skills for Life provision and learners can access courses from pre-entry level through to GCSE. The courses are held in adult community education centres, schools and libraries across the county to allow convenient access for the geographically widespread population.
- Outcomes for learners on numeracy programmes are satisfactory. The majority of learners take discrete numeracy courses and in 2009/10

success rates on these courses were around recent national averages. A minority of numeracy courses are short programmes or reflect the service's collaboration with local employers. On these numeracy courses, outcomes are better, at or above national averages. The service's self-assessment report notes accurately that retention rates are sometimes low and, in 2009/10, ranged between 75% and 81%. Outcomes for male learners were around five percentage points below those for females.

- Teaching and learning in numeracy sessions are satisfactory. Learning sessions are generally planned well and carried out in an encouraging atmosphere. Learners make the best progress in numeracy when the teachers ensure that the activities and resources are matched well to the learners' needs and abilities. Learning resources are appropriate and used to good effect. However, a minority of starter activities go on for too long and do not allow learners enough time to complete the main activities. More able learners are not always fully occupied and in some cases not all learners take part in discussion or are included in question and answer sessions.
- Individual learning plans are satisfactory and help learners make progress. Some contain detailed analyses of the progress made by learners. In others, targets are generic and reflect only the aspirations of learners to obtain a qualification. Managers acknowledge this and are implementing review procedures and training for teachers to help learners set more quantitative, specific targets.
- The service is marketed well and promoted across the county. In addition, well organised initial assessment ensures that learners are allocated to appropriate programmes.
- The provision of numeracy courses for learning support assistants provides a useful service in the county schools. Derbyshire County Council workers also access numeracy programmes successfully to update their skills and gain more confidence in the use of number.
- Curriculum management of numeracy programmes is good. The lesson observation system is thorough and well organised.
- Continuing professional development for staff is good and many teachers report that they have recently attended relevant and thought-provoking training.

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

- raising attainment in numeracy by implementing strategies to tackle any low retention rates and to improve outcomes for male learners
- increasing the rigour of the lesson observation system by ensuring that expected norms are not recorded as strengths
- making sure that staff are confident to help learners set specific and measurable targets to help them progress.

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

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to the Skills Funding Agency and will be published on the Ofsted website under the UPIN for your organisation. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

**Alex Falconer**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**