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Mr C Sadler  
Principal  
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Dear Mr Sadler

**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 5 and 6 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 senior staff, tutors and learners; five observations of teaching and learning in numeracy; and a review of the supporting documentation provided.

Overall, Kirklees 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**

- The college works effectively with local partners to identify and meet local needs for skills for life, including numeracy. It offers a good range of programmes to support the training needs in numeracy of 16–18 year olds, of adults in the community, and of local employers. In particular, the college is effective in setting up numeracy provision specifically for those with clearly identified needs, such as young people not in training education or employment, speakers of other languages, and adults living in areas of high deprivation. However, the college does not have separate targets for recruiting adult learners to numeracy classes.
- The college has made good progress towards implementing a whole-organisational approach to skills for life following the merger of two local

colleges in August 2008. The director for Skills for Life now manages all literacy and numeracy programmes. Significant action to implement the strategy includes an extensive professional development programme to develop the expertise of staff teaching numeracy and the development of a pilot programme to introduce functional skills. The self-assessment report for Skills for Life is detailed and evaluative. However, it contains little emphasis on numeracy as a separate subject.

- Arrangements for additional numeracy support are very effective. College staff responsible for numeracy have a good understanding of the barriers learners face, including dyscalculia. All learners identified as needing additional support are required to take up this offer as part of their programme. Achievement and retention for learners receiving this support are as good as or better than those not requiring additional support.
- Teaching and learning observed during the visit were satisfactory overall. Positive features included good planning of overall courses and individual lessons. The functional skills course at foundation level successfully integrated the development of numeracy, literacy and personal skills. However, the schemes of work and lesson plans reviewed did not always specify clearly enough how teachers intended to adapt learning activities or materials according to the needs of all the learners. Teachers engaged learners' interest well and extended opportunities to practise skills through a good variety of activities, including games. Some teachers made particularly effective use of probing questions to help learners to understand mathematical processes and concepts.
- Weaker aspects of numeracy teaching and learning included lessons that were slow to involve learners, especially at the beginning of the sessions. Teachers sometimes did not use visual prompts and other images well enough to reinforce learning. For example, the interactive whiteboard tended to be little more than a static display of information, writing on whiteboards was sometimes unclear, and handouts were often unimaginative.
- Learners spoke highly of the welcoming adult environment and the individual support the teachers gave them. In the better lessons, learners understood what they needed to do and engaged enthusiastically in the planned activities. However, where classroom management was poor, some learners were under-occupied in class and tended to lose concentration.
- Qualification success rates in numeracy and mathematics provision up to level 2 were low in 2008/09, particularly for application of number, although these showed a slight improvement in 2009/10. Success rates for GCSE in mathematics have shown a steady improvement and were good in 2009/10. Success rates for Train to Gain were also good. The college has made some progress in improving low retention rates for 16–18 year olds, but they remain low for adult learners.
- Learners interviewed said they valued the opportunity to gain numeracy qualifications to pursue further and higher study, and to strengthen their employment prospects. Some very vulnerable learners had overcome a

deep fear of mathematics and they had developed the confidence to succeed where previously they had failed.

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

- ensuring that all learners, especially those attending the discrete adult classes, receive the support, training and encouragement they need to help ensure that they stay on their programmes and develop the skills required for the qualifications
- developing further the successful implementation of numeracy teaching and learning according to the requirements of the functional skills qualifications
- building on the whole-organisation approach, to develop opportunities to share good practice in teaching and learning in numeracy across all types of provision
- ensuring that quality improvement procedures, including the lesson observation system, data analysis, and self-assessment, place enough emphasis on numeracy as a separate subject to inform action for improvement.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop numeracy at Kirklees 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

**Jan Smith**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**