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Ms A Platt  
Head of Reducing Re-offending  
HMP and YOI Styal  
Wilmslow  
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Dear Ms Platt

**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 21 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 The Manchester College, which holds the contract to provide learning and skills, staff of Working Links, which holds the contract to provide career information and advice, and prisoners; scrutiny of relevant documents; observation of two learning sessions in numeracy; and visits to work sites and vocational training workshops.

Overall, HMP and YOI Styal is good 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**

- Prison and college managers have a very good understanding of the numeracy needs of women prisoners. They provide a good range of learning opportunities that includes discrete combined programmes in numeracy and literacy, a drop-in centre, individual support programmes and very good opportunities to develop numeracy skills as part of vocational training or work. Take-up of the provision is good and prisoners interviewed valued the facility to drop in for support in numeracy or join a

class once they have gained the confidence and motivation to attend education provision.

- The prison has good arrangements for initial and diagnostic assessments for prisoners joining education. Learners and staff receive clear information on the results of each assessment. The numeracy specialists and vocational tutors use very effectively the detailed information about learners' levels and the skills that they need to develop, when planning their sessions and monitoring learners' progress. However, the initial assessment, that prisoners take part in at induction, is unreliable and not thorough enough. The prison does not have accurate information about the numeracy needs of all prisoners.
- The strategy for Skills for Life provides satisfactory information on the range of provision and the prison's vision for this area of work. However, much of it is generic to literacy and numeracy, and it does not provide clear objectives as to how the provision intends to meet the needs of women prisoners. The strategy does not refer well enough to the need to develop the functional numeracy skills these women may need in prison and on release. Similarly, it does not include the role of the offender management unit in identifying clear targets on the sentence plan for numeracy (or literacy).
- The teaching of numeracy observed during the visit in hair and beauty was outstanding. The vocational tutors had identified the very wide range of work-related tasks that involved knowledge and skills in numeracy. Some of the learners interviewed had low levels of numeracy and were motivated to improve their skills as part of their vocational training and they made good progress. The tutors had developed a good range of relevant posters, prompts, guidance and worksheets to help the learners understand the numeracy skills required for their work. The tutors provided learners with good individual support until they were confident that the learners could apply the relevant numeracy skills independently in the salons. The other vocational training and work areas, such as industrial cleaning, gardens and information and communication technology, also include learners' development of numeracy skills effectively. Many learners sign up for education courses to continue their learning in numeracy and gain a qualification.
- In the numeracy sessions observed, the tutors were particularly energetic and enthusiastic and provided a good range of practical and interesting learning activities. The life skills course covers relevant topics, such as money management and gambling awareness. However, the lesson plans do not show the specific numeracy skills involved to ensure that learners receive the support they require. Learners do not receive sufficient opportunities in the life skills and discrete numeracy provision to develop and practise some of the very practical and functional skills they need to support their life in custody and in resettlement.
- The college and prison staff support the numeracy tutors well to help them develop the expertise in teaching numeracy and the initial work to implement functional skills has been effective. The teaching staff work well in teams and share ideas and learning materials frequently. However, they do not have sufficient opportunities to share good practice with staff from

other prisons or the numeracy specialist from the college. Some prisoners attending education or training take on the enhanced role of providing learning support to fellow prisoners. However, the prison does not manage this role effectively. The orderlies do not receive sufficient initial training or guidance to support their work and lesson plans do not contain information on how they should support learners in each session.

- Retention rates are good and nearly all of the learners who complete a numeracy course achieve the qualification. Many learners attending education, who were interviewed, said that they had developed some of the specific numeracy skills that had baffled them in the past. Learners on vocational programmes develop a good level of competence and accuracy in carrying out work-related tasks. However, not all of the learners receive a permanent record of the learning they have achieved in vocational areas.

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

- increasing the number of prisoners who undergo a full valid and reliable initial assessment of their numeracy skills to ensure that the prison has accurate information on the level of need
- ensuring that the Skills for Life strategy and related action plans deal with literacy and numeracy as separate subjects, and considering the specific needs of women prisoners, including the functional numeracy skills they need in custody and on release to support their development and to help reduce re-offending
- continuing to develop the expertise of all staff teaching numeracy, including their understanding of supporting learners with specific learning difficulties through wider opportunities for sharing good practice
- improving the management of orderlies working with fellow prisoners to support the development in numeracy.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop numeracy at HMP and YOI Styal.

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**