

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231  
F 020 7421 6855  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
www.ofsted.gov.uk



19 October 2010

Mr T Jackson  
Principal  
Sparsholt College  
Westley Lane  
Sparsholt  
Winchester  
SO21 2NF

Dear Mr Jackson

**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 and 22 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 staff and learners; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of learners' work and observations of six learning sessions in numeracy.

Overall, Sparsholt College 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**

- Numeracy has a high profile in the college's strategy for learners' development. The numeracy provision is managed well. Managers use self-assessment effectively to develop its numeracy provision and raise standards. The college has a clear and accurate view of the quality of its work in numeracy. It has made a significant investment in staff's time and other resources to increase the numeracy support offered to learners and to make it more effective.
- The college has an extensive range of numeracy provision across its discrete and vocational courses. It has identified more demand from adults in some areas of Andover and is exploring the possibility of how to

undertake more outreach work in this area. The college is managing effectively the well-planned arrangements for introducing functional skills.

- Although staff use a wide range of initial and diagnostic assessments well to identify learners' development needs in numeracy and plan appropriate individual learning support, the results of these assessments could be used better to inform decision-making and planning to support numeracy locally, for example by sharing these issues across local 14–19 partnerships.
- Staff teaching numeracy have appropriate qualifications. Vocational tutors value the good range of opportunities to develop their expertise in providing numeracy support. Staff teaching numeracy across the foundation studies area and the vocational areas work particularly well as a team to share resources and plan learning activities. The learning support assistants support learners with their development in numeracy well. However, their deployment needs to be kept under review as in a few lessons it did not match the needs of the group.
- The teaching and learning sessions observed were good. Teachers were supportive and encouraging, and they worked well to ensure that learning activities were sufficiently demanding for each learner without being too overwhelming. In a small number of learning sessions, the learning activities did not engage all learners effectively. The college has a good range of learning resources, including a well-developed virtual learning environment that includes numeracy resources.
- Success rates are improving overall, and are at or above national benchmarks for most of the provision. Retention and achievement are lower in the small amount of level 3 provision and in a small number of other vocational areas. Managers are taking appropriate corrective action identified in the self-assessment report. .
- Learners make good progress in learning sessions and attendance was high in 2009/10. Learners appreciate the support they receive from their teachers and feel that they are making good progress in developing their numeracy skills, many of them for the first time.

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

- continuing the trend of raising success rates generally, and at level 3 in particular
- continuing to develop effective approaches to supporting individual learners' needs in learning sessions
- sharing the outcomes of initial assessment more widely across local 14–19 partnerships to raise numeracy as an issue that all local partners can contribute to addressing
- ensuring that the deployment of learning support assistants to learning sessions matches the numeracy support needs of the group.

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

**Wilf Hudson**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**