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22 February 2009

Jackie Crowther
Family Learning Co-ordinator
Directorate Swindon Borough Council
Premier House
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Dear Jackie

Ofsted Good Practice Survey Programme 2008/09

An evaluation of the benefits of family learning for individuals, families and communities

Thank you for your hospitality during my visit on the 4th February 2009. I am particularly grateful to you, all your staff and learners for the hard work involved in preparing for the visit and for giving up a great deal of time during the visit to meet with me. I really appreciated the enthusiasm of all involved in sharing the practice and outcomes of family learning activities in Swindon. Please pass on my thanks to all those concerned.

The visit provided much useful evidence, which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting for the family learning survey. I was particularly pleased to meet so many learners from different courses across Swindon at Gorse Hill Children's Centre, learners at the Swindon Academy and at Drove Primary School and to hear how family learning had helped them:

- *improve confidence*
- *becomes less isolated*
- *exercise together as a family*
- *improve parenting skills*
- *gain qualifications*
- *gain new literacy and numeracy skills*
- *move into volunteering and employment*
- *learn about each other's cultures*
- *support their children's learning*

- *enhance creativity skill*
- *create learning resources to use in school and at home*

The evidence used to inform the judgements made on this one-day visit included: interviews with staff, discussions with learners, discussions with partners and observations of a family learning session. I also reviewed a range of documentation, case studies and reports.

The family learning provision sampled (two sessions) during my one-day visit at Swindon Borough Council is good. I agreed to provide a summary of the good practice seen and to identify some areas for development, and I outline the main findings as bulleted points below.

The main strengths are:

- very good programmes to promote community cohesion
- good development of learners skills and capabilities
- good partnerships to meet the needs of families at risk
- good involvement of learners in developing the curriculum
- effective use of Learning Ambassadors to engage priority learners

Areas for further development

- improve the links between wider family learning and family literacy, language and numeracy
- prioritise the introduction of the new family learning impact programmes

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop your Family Learning provision. If there are any points or aspects of the visit you wish to discuss, please contact me. As we will be evaluating the survey, you may be contacted in the future to find out your views. I hope you will contribute to this evaluation.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted Website.

Yours sincerely

Penny Lamb
Additional Inspector