

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr D Kendall
The Director
Derwen College
Oswestry
Shropshire
SY11 3JA

Dear Mr Kendall

Ofsted survey inspection programme – good practice in literacy

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and learners, during my visit on 14 October 2009 to look at work in literacy.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: two lesson observations; discussions with you and members of your senior management team; discussions with four curriculum managers, including the cross-college coordinator for literacy; discussions with five tutors; discussions with six learners and examination of some of your college documentation.

Features of good practice observed

- The college provides extensive and very effective opportunities for learners in literacy, with a clear strategy in place and a well-established whole-college approach to literacy skills development. The organisational structure promotes the importance of the development of learners' literacy skills particularly well.
- Managers and tutors have a very good understanding of the barriers learners face in developing their literacy skills and of successful strategies to help learners overcome these barriers. Staff are very clear that they all have a responsibility to develop learners' literacy skills.
- All learners have individual, specific and very clear objectives for their literacy skills development, which they review regularly with their tutors. Both literacy tutors and vocational tutors make good use of a college-wide

database to record learners' progress. This clearly demonstrates that learners are making good progress in the development of their literacy skills. One learner I spoke to described how he can now read many more words and is able to write in full sentences.

- The combination of specialist literacy support for learners, as well as literacy skills development in their vocational study areas, is working very effectively. Specialist literacy tutors, as well as vocational tutors, have developed a good range of methods to support learners. They make good use of a wide range of strategies to meet individual learner needs, which includes the use of phonics. In addition, in all vocational areas, tutors display key vocabulary and phrases in words, in pictures and in symbols, to maximise and to reinforce learning.
- Learners further develop their literacy skills in real working environments. For example, in the lessons I observed, learners were reading, compiling and typing menus in the college restaurant and reading and typing stock lists in the catering area. In more informal settings, I observed learners confidently using information technology to read, write and send messages to families and friends.

Areas for development

- We discussed the potential of bringing together the databases where learners' information is recorded, to make access for staff more straightforward.
- In addition, we discussed the need for greater consideration of the assessment of learners' written skills in the vocational areas.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop literacy learning in the college.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Kathleen Tyler
Her Majesty's Inspector