

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



24 November 2009

Ms J Rushton
Head of MAES
Victoria Mill
10 Lower Vickers St
Manchester
M40 7LJ

Dear Ms Rushton

Ofsted 2009-10 survey inspection programme: good practice in literacy

Thank you for the hospitality and cooperation of your staff, during my visit on 4 November 2009 to look at work in literacy at Manchester Adult Education Service (MAES).

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 discussions with: the Skills for Life senior curriculum manager; the curriculum manager for literacy, English and dyslexia; two literacy tutors; and two learners individually and a group of learners. I also observed two learning sessions and examined some of your service's documentation.

Features of good practice observed

- Managers have a very strong understanding of the barriers literacy learners face, and what will help overcome them. They are keenly aware of the role that literacy plays in all learning at MAES and work effectively to raise the awareness of its importance among the service's staff. Action to integrate literacy learning with vocational studies is developing well.
- The service ensures that literacy classes are widely available across the city, both in MAES' own centres and in community venues. Classes located in areas of significant deprivation cater well for those in greatest need.
- The service places a strong and successful emphasis on planning for individual needs. It uses the results of initial and subsequent assessments

very effectively when setting clearly defined learning goals, which tutors and learners regularly review and update.

- In the sessions observed, skilled literacy teaching focused strongly on developing learners' core literacy skills, ensuring they understood clearly what new skills they were acquiring as well as their application. Learners appreciated highly the respect they received from tutors, and that the content of sessions reflected their needs and interests as adults.
- Resources are very good. Well-designed learning materials support learning very effectively. Class sizes are small, facilitating high levels of individual and small group work, which learners contrast favourably with their experiences at school. Tutors' expertise and subject knowledge is good.

Areas for development, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring more systematic planning of the support that teaching assistants provide in some sessions
- reviewing provision at level 2 to ensure it meets the differing needs of learners who speak English as an additional language and literacy learners more effectively.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop literacy learning across the service

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

Yours sincerely

Alastair Pearson
Her Majesty's Inspector