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Ms L Fairhurst
Head of Service
Lifelong Learning Oldham Council
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West Street
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Dear Ms Fairhurst

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 3 November 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 discussions with: you and your senior curriculum manager; curriculum managers for literacy and numeracy, family learning and English for speakers of other languages; the workforce development manager; the catering services manager; the union learning representative; tutors; and three learners individually. I also observed two learning sessions, and examined some of your documentation.

Features of good practice observed

- The service has a very strong mission to tackle barriers to learning, within which improving literacy is a key component. A detailed, effective Skills for Life strategy and accompanying implementation plan articulates clearly the service's approach to meeting the literacy needs of local residents.
- Managers and staff at all levels have a keen understanding of the barriers learners face to literacy learning. They work effectively to raise the awareness of partner organisations and managers across the council of what these barriers are and their capacity to help learners overcome them.
- In the sessions observed, learners received good teaching from expert, well-qualified tutors. Tutors unfailingly treated learners as adults, catering

very well for their individual needs and differing ways of learning. Sessions explicitly and effectively focused on how language works, in relevant contexts which interested and engaged learners.

- Learning resources for literacy are outstanding. In dispersed community venues and on the main site, learners and tutors make very good use of information learning technology, as well as the highly imaginative, pertinent and well-presented materials that tutors devise.
- The excellent support learners receive includes extensive crèche provision and significant help with transport costs. It contributes effectively to encouraging learners to join literacy classes and ensuring they complete them.

Areas for development

- I did not identify any areas for development.

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