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Ms B Holm
Head of Service
Westminster Adult Education
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Dear Ms Holm

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 10 December 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included interviews with senior staff, tutors and learners, two observations of literacy teaching and a review of supporting documentation provided by the college.

Features of good practice

- The service collaborates successfully with partners to provide for the literacy needs of the most disadvantaged adults in the community, such as those with mental ill health.
- The literacy provision is planned effectively to attract new learners through first-step community-based classes, and to support their progress towards participation in mainstream courses.
- The service links literacy teaching well to other courses, such as computing, childcare, and jewellery making, to motivate learners and develop their literacy skills.
- Tutors understand clearly the importance of helping learners acquire specific literacy skills, such as reading for meaning, decoding words through phonics, and proof-reading.

- The service provides very effective additional learning support, including specialist support for dyslexia, to ensure that all learners can make progress in literacy.
- Tutors make good use of resources, such as interactive whiteboards and of varied activities, such as word-processing, and craft-making in family learning, to strengthen the development of literacy skills.

Areas for development

- We discussed the need for the service to build on newly introduced initial assessment procedures to monitor and improve learners' progress.
- We agreed that to raise the level of achievement in literacy further, the service should continue to implement strategies to improve retention.

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 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

Jan Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector