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Ms P Denham
Vice Principal
South Devon College
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Dear Ms Denham

Ofsted 2009-10 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 19 January 2010 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: observations of learning sessions; visits to centres in the community where the college offers learning; discussions with learners, tutors and college managers; and scrutiny of college documents, including recent data on qualification success and self-assessment reports, course and lesson plans and learners' files.

Features of good practice

- The college effectively identifies social, physical and educational barriers to literacy learning, recognising clearly where these differ for particular cohorts or individuals. This well-developed understanding is reflected consistently by college managers and staff at all levels.
- The college places a strong emphasis on meeting the literacy needs of its learners, effectively prioritising literacy development across the curriculum. Adult and 16 to 19-year-old learners following communication key skills programmes at level 1 and 2 routinely receive helpful in-class additional support, and success rates at level 1 are high.
- The college responds very flexibly to the needs of local people, providing a good range of adult provision in diverse community locations including probation offices, primary schools and workplaces, as well as on the college's main site. Crèche facilities are provided for family literacy

learners, and this is a critical factor in enabling them to attend literacy classes.

- Literacy learners routinely receive very good initial advice and guidance, and thorough initial assessment of their skills. Information from these enables the college to set learners highly appropriate literacy learning goals, and identify swiftly where learners need additional support.
- In the classroom sessions observed, learning was planned very well. Resources were of a high standard. Tutors knew their learners well and put this knowledge to good use in meeting individual literacy needs, particularly those of offenders and ex-offenders.

Areas for development

- We discussed the need to identify suitably stretching accreditation goals when family literacy learners already have good levels of literacy, so as to recognise appropriately the worthwhile gains they make in understanding language, and applying this to their children's learning.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop literacy learning at South Devon 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

Alastair Pearson
Her Majesty's Inspector