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Mr J Yarham
Director Young Peoples' Learning and
Skills, Children & Families
Sandfield Centre
Sandfield Road
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Dear Mr Yarham

Ofsted 2010–11 survey inspection programme: numeracy - tackling the challenge of ensuring that young people and adults gain the numeracy skills they need for their careers and personal lives

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 29 and 30 June 2010 to look at your work in numeracy.

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; observations of numeracy learning sessions; and a review of the supporting documentation you provided.

Overall, Nottingham City Council is good at tackling the challenge of ensuring that young people and adults gain the numeracy skills they need for their careers and personal lives.

Key findings

- The council is making very good progress in setting up numeracy provision in communities identified as having the greatest need. It works very effectively with an extensive range of organisations in the public and private sectors to broaden the range of numeracy provision, especially family numeracy programmes. Take-up of numeracy programmes is good. However, strategic documents do not include sufficient detail of the council's plans for developing its numeracy provision.
- The council has good arrangements to monitor the quality of its provision, including the family learning provision contracted to local colleges. Managers use data particularly well to monitor the programmes and the council has developed effective processes to review and record learners' progress. Staff make good use of the frequent opportunities to share good

practice in teaching numeracy and exchange learning resources, particularly in family numeracy. Although staff teaching family numeracy are well qualified, not enough tutors, teaching numeracy on the council's Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes, have the appropriate qualifications.

- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Positive features of the teaching and learning sessions observed included good use of a wide range of practical resources to help learners develop their understanding of numeracy concepts. Tutors used group discussions well to help learners understand number-based problems in relevant and meaningful ways. In the less effective sessions, tutors did not check learners' understanding of the numerical processes they were using or reinforce numeracy concepts as they came up during the sessions. In E2E, vocational tutors make good use of the sessions to embed teaching and learning in vocational contexts, but they do not make sufficient use of learner's individual numeracy targets when planning learning sessions and individual learning activities
- Learners achieve well. Pass rates are good in family numeracy. Learners interviewed said they had gained confidence in carrying out numeracy tasks and were making more use of these skills in daily life and at work. They felt they had improved their employment prospects and were better able to support their children's numeracy development. E2E learners interviewed said they enjoyed numeracy sessions, particularly the practical activities and the tutors' explanations about calculations. They felt more confident in using their skills and found the opportunity to gain qualifications particularly motivating. In 2008/09, overall pass rates were high.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- implementing its appropriate training programme in numeracy to enhance the expertise of staff teaching numeracy on E2E programmes, including those teaching numeracy embedded in vocational contexts
- implementing a system to ensure that all staff teaching on E2E programmes have easy access to learners' individual learning plans when planning learning and reviewing learners' progress.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop numeracy at Nottingham City Council

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to the Skills Funding Agency and will be published on the Ofsted website under the URN for your organisation. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Heather Clary
Additional Inspector