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6 December 2010

Mr I Millard  
Principal  
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Dear Mr Millard

**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 9 and 10 November 2010 to look at 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 staff, learners and employers; scrutiny of relevant documents; analysis of learners' work; and observation of six lessons.

Overall, City of Wolverhampton College 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**

- Outcomes for learners on discrete numeracy programmes are satisfactory. In 2009/10 success rates for learners on basic numeracy and the certificate in adult numeracy were around recent national averages. Success rates for embedded numeracy programmes, such as key and functional skills, were also around national averages. However, success rates for numeracy on Train to Gain programmes were good.
- The standard of learners' work in numeracy lessons is good and most learners make good use of number in relevant contexts. Numeracy lessons

are busy and carried out in an adult atmosphere where work is completed well.

- Teaching and learning in numeracy lessons are good. Teachers are well qualified and experienced and prepare their lessons thoroughly. Learners' progress is best where numeracy is contextualised and made relevant to their main programmes. This is especially noticeable in lessons for learners at entry level and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Where numeracy progress is no better than satisfactory, opportunities for learners to measure and record findings are limited and some introductory activities drag on for too long.
- Learners value the support they receive to enable them to progress in numeracy. They are particularly appreciative of the thorough, step-by-step explanations of methods by their teachers. They enjoy working on examples on computers, both at home and at college, and find colour-coded worksheets very helpful. Above all, they appreciate the adult atmosphere and being treated with respect. Learning support assistants give sensitive and effective support to learners in lessons.
- The range of numeracy programmes is good and effectively meets learners' needs. Numeracy is embedded in curriculum programmes across the college and at all levels. Links with employers are good and the college has developed successfully the numeracy skills of employees at a local engineering firm. The college has worked well with some local businesses to meet the numeracy needs of their employees.
- Specialist staff lead small teams of numeracy teachers in all but two of the curriculum areas in the college. This has successfully helped improve and develop more contextualised numeracy in vocational programmes. In addition, more efficient enrolment processes have meant that numeracy programmes and additional support for learners are in place earlier in the academic year.
- The management of numeracy curriculum is good. The college has a clear and well-considered numeracy policy within its Skills for Life strategy. The continued focus on embedded numeracy provision has been successful and the standard of teaching and learning has improved.
- Numeracy specialists and additional learning support workers in curriculum areas have assisted in bringing about improvements. Managers have taken steps to make sure that there is a well-qualified cadre of numeracy teachers.

**Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- building on best practice to raise attainment in numeracy
- ensuring that teachers clearly identify and pursue progress in numeracy in all classes
- making sure that starter activities in numeracy classes are more sharply focused to challenge learners

- making sure that all curriculum areas are part of the college-wide drive to improve learners' skills and confidence in using number.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop your numeracy provision.

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 UPIN for your organisation. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

**Alex Falconer**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**