

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



13 October 2010

Mr D Roxburgh
Principal
City College Peterborough
Brook street
Peterborough
PE1 1TU

Dear Mr Roxburgh

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 September 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; three observations of teaching and learning sessions in numeracy; and a review of the supporting documents that you provided.

Overall, The City College Peterborough is satisfactory 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 college uses its very wide ranging partnerships well to keep up to date with trends in the local economy and social developments when reviewing its provision in numeracy. It provides a broad range of numeracy programmes to a wide range of learners, including: school pupils aged 14 to 16; learners aged 16 to 19 who are at risk of not being employed, in education or in training; adults returning to study; work-based learners taking apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships; and those on **learnirect** programmes. The college is particularly successful at providing numeracy programmes in local settings, thus attracting learners that traditionally do not attend college.

- Management and quality improvement arrangements for numeracy are satisfactory. The self-assessment is rigorous, but managers do not consider learners' destinations on leaving a programme in sufficient detail when evaluating the quality of provision for all courses.
- Numeracy tutors use the good opportunities for relevant staff training well to develop their expertise. Similarly, they meet regularly to share learning materials and good practice in the teaching and learning of numeracy. The college's virtual learning environment contains useful materials for the planning of teaching, but it is not developed sufficiently for use by learners.
- Teaching and learning were good in the lessons observed. Teachers had an informal, relaxed approach that created an atmosphere in which learners did not feel intimidated or afraid to ask questions. They used praise and encouragement well to help bolster the learners' self-confidence, often following a fear of mathematics harboured from previous poor experiences and struggling to achieve in this subject.
- Lessons were well-planned and involved a good variety of tasks that maintained learners' focus and helped to consolidate what they were learning. Some younger learners showed challenging behaviour and teachers maintained order effectively to keep them focused on their learning.
- Overall, outcomes for numeracy learners are satisfactory. Pass rates for learners completing courses in GSCE in mathematics, functional mathematics, the entry to employment course and **learnirect** programmes were high in 2009/10. Similarly, school pupils aged 14 to 16 attending vocational courses in the college achieved well. However, apprentices and advanced apprentices taking key skills application of number courses have consistently poor success rates.
- Success rates for learners taking the entry level adult certificate in numeracy course were satisfactory. However, success rates for level 1 and 2 learners on this course dipped and were low in 2009/10. Senior managers attributed this to their recruitment of learners on programmes beyond their current ability level who did not take the final assessment. Procedures are now in place to ensure this does not happen again.
- Attendance rates for adult learners on numeracy courses in 2009/10 improved to 74%, significantly below the college's target of 80%.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving success rates of the certificate in adult numeracy at levels 1 and 2 by ensuring that adults and apprentices are recruited to the appropriate level of course thus making it more likely that they attain the required standards
- continuing to improve the attendance rates of learners on numeracy courses
- developing the college's virtual learning environment to further extend its use for learners as well as staff

- ensuring managers use all relevant data on learners' progression to further education, training and employment when evaluating the effectiveness of the college's numeracy programmes for self-assessment and quality improvement.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop numeracy at The City College Peterborough.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. A copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and the Skills Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

Tony Noonan
Her Majesty's Inspector