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19 October 2010

Ms J Lawrence
Head of Service
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PO6 3TH

Dear Ms Lawrence

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 21 and 22 September 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 staff and learners; scrutiny of relevant documents; analysis of learners' work and observation of one learning session.

Overall, Catch 22 South East Training (Catch 22) 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

- Leaders and managers have taken effective action since the previous inspection to improve some of the inadequate aspects of the numeracy provision. Managers now use the results of a more thorough initial assessment effectively to provide learners with additional numeracy support as required. Tutors have received appropriate training on embedding numeracy and literacy into vocational training. They are using the skills they have developed well to ensure that teaching and learning activities in numeracy are relevant to the related vocational areas. The head of service recognises that there are still areas for improvement and has set challenging and appropriate targets for them.

- Team leaders maintain up-to-date data about learners' rates of progress towards achieving qualifications in application of number. However, the head of service does not have sufficiently detailed or accurate information to monitor trends in learners' overall achievement.
- Catch 22 does not have sufficient appropriately qualified numeracy tutors. The temporary skills for life tutor has a qualification in teaching literacy at level 4 but not an equivalent qualification in teaching numeracy. Tutors generally have qualifications in numeracy that are at the same level as the programmes that they are delivering and assessing.
- Tutors have developed very relevant projects and resources that link numeracy learning well to apprentices' work environments. Sport and recreation learners devise and analyse a 10-week personal fitness programme that prepares them well for future careers as personal trainers. In contrast, learners on the foundation learning programme complete numeracy activities that help with their personal and social development, but do not relate to the relevant vocational contexts.
- Catch 22 has satisfactory arrangements for providing numeracy support. Staff work well in a team and routinely share best practice. Tutors are well aware of, and sensitive to, learners' barriers to learning numeracy and work well with them individually to help them overcome these barriers. In the sessions observed, tutors planned group learning sessions well; they used discussions and number games very effectively to motivate learners to participate in learning activities and improve their confidence and skills. However, low attendance at some learning sessions restricts the effectiveness of group activities
- Overall success rates for apprenticeship frameworks are very high for children's care, learning and development. They are satisfactory for sport and recreation and low for business administration and law. Catch 22's achievement rates for application of number by apprentices also vary by vocational area and are satisfactory overall. The achievement of application of number qualifications by learners on the foundation learning programme improved in 2009/10. However the proportion of these learners working towards this qualification remains very low.
- Learners make good use of numeracy learning in their personal lives and at work. Learners on sports and recreation programmes are more confident in helping customers to convert imperial weights to metric when they use gym equipment. Learners in children's care, learning and development can assist pre-school learners with basic mathematics more easily. Apprentices value numeracy as a key factor in their career progression. Learners in foundation learning have an increased awareness of budgeting and how to calculate amounts and the change that they should receive when shopping.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- maintaining the level of improvement through the agreed actions and targets, particularly in ensuring that there are sufficient numeracy specialists with appropriate specialist qualifications

- improving the range of data available to the management team to ensure more accurate monitoring of learners' progress and achievements in numeracy
- promoting the value of numeracy to learners on foundation learning programmes to increase group sizes and attendance, thus maximising the effectiveness of the interactive learning activities and increasing the numbers of learners working towards a qualification in numeracy.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop numeracy at Catch 22 South East Training.

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

Janet Rodgers
Her Majesty's Inspector