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Ms J Dargie
Senior Consultant
Four Counties Training Ltd
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Dear Ms Dargie

Ofsted 2009-10 survey inspection programme: good practice in literacy

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and learners, during my visit on 23 February 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: interviews with staff and learners; scrutiny of relevant documentation and learners' work; and two observations of teaching and learning.

Features of good practice

- The management of learners' literacy skills development and achievement at Four Counties Training (FCT) is very effective. Managers have a very good understanding of the varied and distinctive aspects of literacy learning for 16 to 18 year olds and learners who are over 19, on apprenticeship programmes, employer responsive programmes and on the programmes the company develops in response to specific identified needs.
- FCT has a well established and very effective partnership with London Underground to deliver a range of vocational training programmes which includes specialist literacy support. As part of this, FCT designed and developed a very successful employability programme for learners and potential employees, at entry 3 level in literacy and/or numeracy, who wanted to progress to employment in the sector. Learners improved their literacy and successfully completed key skills communication at level 1. Of 14 learners, eight successfully progressed to employment

- The close working relationship with London Underground, has led to FCT carrying out very useful research into the literacy needs of specific groups of employees, for example, train drivers. Alongside this work, FCT carried out further useful research and analysis on the readability of documentation that London Underground routinely uses with staff across the organisation. These pieces of research provided the employer with very clear evidence on literacy issues within the organisation.
- Additional support for learners with dyslexia is highly effective. Assessment for dyslexia is detailed and thorough. Very skilled and experienced staff provide outstanding specialist support on an individual basis. Learners with dyslexia clearly describe the very good progress they are now making in reading and writing, after, in some instances, over 40 years of hiding their learning difficulty. Tutors skilfully identify very specific learning objectives and individual strategies for each learner. Learners routinely point to the specific strategies which have been most successful for them and describe how the support they receive has significantly improved their lives.

Areas for development

- None identified.

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

Kathleen Tyler
Additional Inspector