

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr S Carlisle
Principal
Accrington and Rossendale College
Broad Oak Campus
Broad Oak Road
Accrington
BB5 2AW

Dear Mr Carlisle

Ofsted subject survey: good practice in literacy

I would like to thank the college for its hospitality and cooperation during my visit on 7 October 2009 to look at work in literacy and, in particular, that of the Vice-Principal for standards and performance and other members of your staff.

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 made included two lesson observations; discussions with two members of your senior management team; discussions with four managers and leaders, and four teaching and support staff; individual discussions with two learners and a group discussion with three learners, and examination of some of your college documentation.

Features of good practice observed

- The college has had a significant impact in helping individuals attend literacy provision. Well-designed outreach projects have been extremely successful in providing specific groups of local people, such as those who were homeless, from the travelling community or with a mental illness, with an introduction to learning that has subsequently led to them attending literacy provision.
- The college has implemented its Skills for Life policy very effectively to help ensure that all learners who are assessed below level 2 in literacy receive specialist teaching and support to improve their skills. The college monitors its progress in achieving this very effectively.

- Specialist literacy teachers allocated to faculty teams work very well with vocational tutors to identify the literacy learning needs of each group of learners. They provide good specialist teaching and support to learners, especially those aged 16 to 18, to improve their literacy skills as part of their main programme.
- The college provides very good additional learning support for all age-groups, particularly for people with dyslexia, mental illnesses and physical disabilities. Learners use a wide range of technology very effectively and make good progress in becoming more independent in their approach to learning literacy.

Areas for development

- The college should ensure that individual learning plans are used effectively to record how learners' development in literacy relates to their wider medium- or long-term goals and that learners receive more detailed feedback on their overall progress towards these.
- Teachers should make greater use of learning activities that improve learners' speaking and listening skills as part of their literacy development.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop literacy learning in the college.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local learning and skills council and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Karen Adriaanse
Her Majesty's Inspector