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Mr D Mewes
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Dear Mr Mewes

Ofsted 2008-09 survey inspection programme: narrowing the gap in literacy and numeracy

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 10 June 2008 to look at work in literacy and numeracy.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at the key areas of literacy and numeracy, the visit had a particular focus on how the school is closing the gap for learners at risk of not reaching the expected level of attainment for their age. The visit also evaluated the level of expertise within the school to support pupils learning English as an additional language.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of provision for literacy and numeracy was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Standards in literacy and numeracy are average. Achievement is good.

- From their low starting points, particularly in communication, language and literacy, pupils make good progress to reach standards that are broadly average in literacy and numeracy by the end of Year 6.

- By the end of Year 2 standards in reading and mathematics are in line with those expected nationally, although fewer pupils reach the highest levels. Standards in writing are below average.
- Standards are better in mathematics than English by the end of Year 6. In 2007, standards improved significantly in mathematics and a larger proportion of pupils reached the highest levels compared to those nationally.
- Lessons observed and the school's own monitoring information indicates that pupils make good progress, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, because their needs are identified early and met well.
- A high priority is given to developing pupils' literacy skills. Through its own detailed data analysis, the school is addressing weaknesses it has identified in writing.

Quality of teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy

The quality of teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy is good.

- Assessment information is used effectively to ensure that lessons are well structured and planned so that pupils can achieve well.
- Pupils are interested and motivated by teachers' lively delivery, brisk pace and the increasing relevant, practical activities which build effectively on prior learning and makes lessons fun.
- Pupils develop confidence and good speaking and listening skills through discussions and sharing ideas. This makes a particular contribution to their personal development.
- Pupils value the help they are given in literacy and numeracy lessons but additional adults are not used effectively to support learning during whole class activities.
- Pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve in writing because they have clear targets for improvement. How these targets are used and reviewed throughout the school is not yet consistent. Targets for numeracy are not yet established.
- Pupils are involved in evaluating their work and marking is supportive but opportunities for pupils to act on these comments are not established.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in literacy and numeracy is good.

- The literacy curriculum includes a daily, phonics-based, intensive reading programme for pupils to ensure they reach the expected levels by the end of Year 2. This is helping to raise standards in reading and pupils' enjoyment.
- Significant additional resources are being used to deliver the programme in small groups by well-trained teaching assistants and teachers although the space some groups are working in is inappropriate, or example for those working in the main corridor.

- Books for older pupils who have not reached the expected reading levels have been chosen carefully to meet their interest and maturity levels so they are increasingly motivated to read.
- Opportunities for extended and focused writing have been increased to address weaknesses in writing skills that the school has identified through its rigorous monitoring and tracking systems.
- Curriculum plans for literacy and numeracy are detailed, build effectively on prior learning and identify different tasks for the varied ability groups in each year group.
- Links are being developed to provide pupils with relevant and systematic opportunities to use their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.
- Computers are readily available but opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology (ICT) in literacy and numeracy lessons to develop and apply their skills are limited.

Leadership and management of literacy and numeracy

Leadership and management of literacy and numeracy are good.

- Self evaluation is accurate and searching so leaders have a precise understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in literacy and numeracy.
- Evaluation is well informed by detailed and rigorous analysis of performance data and systematic monitoring information to support planning for improvement.
- Plans for improvement are detailed but lack precise, quantifiable measures of success.
- There is a clear sense of direction and a relentless drive for improvement. This is underpinned by high expectations, attention to detail and a commitment to ensuring that every pupil reaches the expected levels in reading and writing.
- All staff are held to account for the standards that pupils reach and the progress they make. They are provided with good levels of support and challenge to secure improvement.
- Effective practice is recognised and shared so that all staff develop the skills and knowledge that they need to promote good teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy.

English as an additional language

- The school has no pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- None of the staff have undertaken training in supporting pupils with English as an additional language.

Inclusion

Inclusion in literacy and numeracy is good.

- The needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are identified quickly through regular assessments in literacy and numeracy.
- Pupils with individual education plans have literacy and numeracy targets which are shared with the class teachers and reviewed systematically.
- Monitoring and tracking information is used effectively to evaluate the impact of support and interventions for those pupils who are not making the progress expected.
- One to one support and short periods of intensive daily reading are provided for pupils who are not making sufficient progress. The school's tracking information shows this is having a positive impact on helping these pupils to catch up with their reading.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- using consistently target setting and marking in literacy and numeracy so that pupils know what they need to do to improve
- increasing opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their literacy and numeracy skills by using ICT in lessons; and
- ensuring that teaching assistants are used effectively in literacy and numeracy lessons, particularly whole class activities, to support learning.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop literacy and numeracy in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Jackie Krafft
Her Majesty's Inspector