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Mrs R Morris
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Morris

Ofsted survey inspection programme – narrowing the gap in literacy and numeracy

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during the visit on 25 June 2008 to look at work in literacy and numeracy.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of literacy and numeracy, the visit had a particular focus on how effectively the school is narrowing the gap for pupils 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 with 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 seven part-lessons.

The overall effectiveness of provision to narrow the gap in literacy and numeracy was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

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

- From their low starting points, particularly in communication, language and literacy, pupils make good progress in literacy and numeracy to reach standards that are average at the end of Years 2 and 6.

- Pupils on the school's register of special needs make slightly better progress than similar pupils nationally.
- Pupils whose first language is not English make similar progress to other pupils in the school.
- In the 2007 end-of-Key Stage 2 tests, a below average proportion of pupils reached Level 5 in writing (8%). Proportions of pupils reaching Level 5 in reading and mathematics were above average.
- In literacy and numeracy lessons, pupils behave well and have very positive attitudes to learning. They cooperate well together, are self-confident, respect their teachers and enjoy their lessons.

Quality of teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy

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

- Teaching is consistently good in all key stages.
- Tasks set are matched well to the needs of most pupils, especially to those of average and below average levels of attainment.
- Teachers know pupils well and have high expectations of pupils' behaviour.
- Teaching assistants are highly skilled and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning when deployed effectively.
- Effective tracking of pupils' progress allows teachers and leaders to identify pupils who are underachieving and provide support and guidance.
- Marking and target setting are sometimes used well and provide good guidance for improvement, but this is inconsistent.

Quality of the curriculum

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

- Strong focus on supporting pupils' personal, social and emotional development helps pupils' develop self-confidence. This has a positive effect on pupils' achievement.
- Learning in literacy and numeracy is often linked to activities undertaken outside the classroom to make them more meaningful, enjoyable, exciting and relevant to pupils.
- The curriculum is reviewed and modified to meet the needs of classes or groups of pupils. For example, greater emphasis was placed on language and communication in a Year 1 class to support particularly low levels of language development.

Leadership and management of literacy and numeracy

The leadership and management of provision to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are good.

- Regular assessment of progress enables all leaders to have a good overview of standards and achievement in all classes.

- Data from the school's detailed tracking system is used effectively to target support at pupils who are underachieving and modify the curriculum in response to pupils' needs.
- All leaders help to maintain the school's strong focus on improving pupils' academic achievement through promoting personal, social and emotional development.

English as an additional language

Provision for English as an additional language is satisfactory.

- Although teaching assistant time is allocated to support pupils, the level of expertise within the school to support pupils learning English as an additional language is limited. There is little opportunity for staff to receive training.
- There is a very positive ethos in the school to promote the language and culture of new arrivals.
- Good relationships between staff and pupils learning English as an additional language helps pupils develop confidence and make good progress.

Inclusion

Inclusion in literacy and numeracy is good.

- The school is successful in ensuring that a high proportion of pupils reach at least the standard expected for their age.
- Pupils identified as requiring special support make slightly better progress than similar pupils nationally.
- Pupils learning English as an additional language make similar progress to other pupils in the school.
- Good support for pupils who are underachieving is provided through highly skilled teaching assistants.
- Very good provision for pupils' personal and social development provides a firm foundation for learning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included to:

- ensure that target setting and marking in literacy and numeracy are used consistently so that pupils know what they need to do to improve
- ensure that teaching assistants are used effectively in all literacy and numeracy lessons to support learning
- develop the knowledge and expertise of staff to support pupils learning English as an additional language.

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

Roy Bowers
Her Majesty's Inspector