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Mrs D Atkinson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Atkinson

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 07 July 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 seven lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

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

- Pupils make good progress to reach standards that are above average in literacy and numeracy by the end of Year 6.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 have improved over the past six years. The school's own assessment information indicates that this improving trend has continued in 2008

with more pupils reaching the nationally expected level of attainment than in the previous year.

- Significant improvement is evident in the provisional results at the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics, including at the highest levels. Challenging targets have been exceeded.
- Lessons observed and the school's own monitoring information indicates that pupils make good progress, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are learning English as an additional language, because their needs are identified early and met well.
- Pupils understand what is expected of them and say that they are given extra help if needed. This makes a significant contribution to their good personal development and well-being, particularly their enjoyment of literacy and numeracy.

Quality of teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy

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

- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning, are motivated and work productively because relationships are good and expectations are high.
- Assessment information is analysed effectively to ensure that lessons build on pupils' prior learning, are carefully structured and activities are planned to meet the varied needs of all pupils.
- Pupils are provided with good opportunities to work collaboratively which contributes to their confidence and enjoyment although when tasks are not sufficiently challenging some pupils lose concentration and the pace of learning slows.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They make explicit what pupils will be learning and how their success will be measured, providing clear explanations and modelling good responses.
- Plenary sessions and challenging questions are used to good effect in lessons to assess how well pupils have achieved.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve because they have clear targets for improvement in literacy and numeracy.
- Good use is made of marking to provide useful, detailed feedback to pupils which they agree helps them to improve their work.

Quality of the curriculum

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

- A high priority has been given to providing an interesting, relevant curriculum which gives pupils a purpose for writing and meaningful opportunities to use their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Excellent use is made of the local area, visits and visitors to provide pupils with real experiences and makes learning in literacy and numeracy exciting and purposeful.
- Links with other subjects such as art, music and history are particularly strong in literacy and enable pupils to produce high quality writing.

- The use of excellent resources, including the creative use of information and communication technology, interest and engage all pupils, particularly those learning to speak English as an additional language.
- The school has given a high priority to developing reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. Strong links have been made with the local specialist arts college to promote the use of drama and role play, for example in literacy lessons.

Leadership and management of literacy and numeracy

Leadership and management of literacy and numeracy are good.

- There is a constant focus on improvement which is strongly driven by senior leaders who act as good role models and promote high expectations for raising all pupils' standards and achievements.
- Effective use is made of monitoring and tracking information to ensure that the needs of all pupils are understood and staff are held to account for the progress that they make.
- Staff training needs are kept under regular review. A wide range of professional development ensures that staff have the skills and knowledge they need to close the gap for all learners in literacy and numeracy.
- A new tracking system has been devised and training provided to ensure that pupils make a smooth transition from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1 and their progress in literacy and numeracy is sustained.
- Effective deployment of staff with particular expertise in one key stage ensures that pupils continue to make good progress as they move from Year 2 to Year 3.
- The school's improvement plan clearly identifies steps for raising standards and sets challenging targets across the whole school. Target setting and evaluation is not yet systematic for specific groups of learners.

English as an additional language

Provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language is good.

- All staff understand and meet the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language as a result of effective training.
- Provision is led by a senior leader who is supported by the Special Educational Needs Coordinator and an identified teaching assistant. There are effective links with the local authority specialist advisers so pupils' learning, as well as their language needs, are identified early.
- Parents who do not speak English are provided with additional support when needed and pupils have access to good quality resources in their first language. As a result, pupils settle quickly and make good progress in English language acquisition.

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 and thorough assessments in literacy and numeracy.
- Groups of pupils in each year group who are not making the progress expected in literacy and numeracy are identified quickly and provided with a wide range of support programmes to ensure that their progress is accelerated.
- Support programmes are used as short term remedial action and modified appropriately.
- Specific, daily phonics teaching is given to pupils who are identified as needing additional support in developing their reading skills.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing the use of assessment information to set challenging targets for specific groups of learners
- ensuring that all lessons are as good as the best by providing activities which are challenging for all learners.

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