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11 July 2008

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Dear Mr Cook

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 my visit on 08 July 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 considered 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 five part-lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement in literacy and numeracy is outstanding. Standards are usually well above average by the end of Key Stage 2.

- Pupils make at least good progress each year in developing literacy and numeracy skills, building very well on enhanced standards as they

move through the school. Consequently, their overall achievement in these skills is outstanding.

- In the lessons observed, pupils were working at an advanced standard for their age. In some lessons in Key Stage 2 they coped with work that was well ahead of what is expected for students of a similar age.
- Standards were exceptionally high in the 2007 national tests at the end of Key Stage 2. In the current Year 6, standards are not quite as high but nonetheless, these pupils have exceeded the targets set for them.
- Pupils' personal development is excellent. They usually apply themselves very well to their work. They want to do well and achieve their individual targets. By Year 6 they are thoughtful, confident and mature for their age.
- Pupils' achievement is aided by high levels of support from parents and carers and very good arrangements for smooth transition and continuity in learning as pupils move through the school.

Quality of teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy

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

- Teaching is generally at least good and some, notably in Key Stage 2, is of particularly good quality.
- In the most effective lessons, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are very high and clear connections are made between different elements of the work or between subjects.
- Teaching assistants are skilled and teachers work in close partnership with them.
- Teaching assistants often work with pupils who have not fully grasped the content of a lesson. A particular strength is the arrangement for a teaching assistant to prepare small groups of pupils for what is to come in future class lessons. This intervention enables pupils to keep up with others and to participate in and contribute meaningfully to lessons.
- Regular assessments enable class teachers to keep track of pupils' progress term by term and staff are quick to identify and support pupils who need additional help.
- The marking of pupils' work strikes a good balance between praise, acknowledgement of achievement against specific learning objectives, and indication for how pupils could do better.
- Staff are reflective about their work and constantly seeking to improve their teaching.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of provision for literacy and numeracy is good. Provision to narrow the attainment gap is particularly effective.

- Carefully tailored packages and adaptations of commercial materials support individual pupils well.
- The school's programme of teaching phonics ensures that, in the early years, pupils acquire the skills to tackle reading and writing.
- Resources have been purchased to further engage boys' interests.

- Pupils have opportunities to use their literacy and numeracy skills across a range of subjects. However, the use and development of these key skills across subjects is not yet planned rigorously at a whole-school level.

Leadership and management

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

- Subject leaders have an overview of pupils' achievement and effectively evaluate and modify the various interventions and materials used to support achievement. However, the current system for keeping track of assessment information does not facilitate the monitoring of standards and progress by subject leaders.
- Subject leaders provide good training and advice for staff.
- Subject leaders have a sense of direction for the development of provision for literacy and numeracy but this is not worked out in specific planning of how their intentions are to be realised.

English as an additional language

The school has no pupils for whom English is an additional language. Therefore no judgment has been made on the level of expertise within the school to support such pupils.

Inclusion

Inclusion in literacy and numeracy is outstanding.

- The school is successful in ensuring that almost all pupils reach at least the standard expected for their age.
- The school provides extremely well for pupils at risk of falling behind and those who need an extra push to reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Teaching assistants are deployed very well to help pupils keep up with the work covered in class lessons.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- planning opportunities for pupils to use and develop literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum in a more systematic and rigorous way
- refining the systems used to keep track of information from assessments of pupils' achievement.

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

Pat Kime
Her Majesty's Inspector