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Mrs K Palmer  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Palmer

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 02 October 2008 to look at work in literacy and numeracy.

As outlined in the initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of literacy and numeracy, my 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 nine parts of lessons and support group activities.

The overall effectiveness in narrowing the gap for pupils at risk of not reaching the expected level of attainment for their age in literacy and numeracy was judged to be outstanding.

#### Achievement and standards

Achievement in literacy and numeracy is outstanding. Standards are average overall. The achievement of pupils below the expected level of attainment for their age is outstanding.

- Pupils make outstanding progress so that most reach the expected level of attainment for their age in literacy and numeracy by the end of Year 6. This is higher than nationally.
- The school has raised standards in numeracy, closing the gap that existed between pupils' attainment in this subject and literacy. Similar numbers of pupils now reach the expected level in mathematics and English.
- Fewer pupils reach the expected levels in writing compared to reading. The school has identified this as a priority for development and it is included in their plan for improvement.
- The school's focus on developing the skills of the youngest children in linking letters and sounds and calculation has enabled children's excellent progress.
- By the end of Year 6 there is no pattern of underachievement.
- The school's detailed monitoring information shows that pupils who speak English as an additional language, including those who join the school in Years 5 and 6, generally make faster progress than their peers and reach the levels of attainment expected for their age.
- Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress so that most meet or are close to the expected levels of attainment for their age by the time they leave the school.
- Challenging targets in English and mathematics are exceeded.

#### Quality of teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy

The quality of teaching and learning for pupils working below the expected level of attainment for their age is outstanding.

- Features of outstanding teaching are made explicit and understood. Expectations are very high so pupils make excellent progress and take a pride in their work.
- Clear classroom routines, positive relationships and an inviting, attractive learning environment help pupils, particularly those who are new to the country and those with emotional and behavioural needs, to feel safe, confident and ready to learn.
- Excellent guidance is provided to pupils in lessons and good quality marking makes learning meaningful. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and analyse intelligently assessment information to build on what pupils already know and can do.
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide excellent levels of support and challenge for pupils at risk of not attaining the expected levels for their age. They question skilfully and plan carefully, activities which are very well matched to the needs of learners.
- Good quality, varied, practical resources and excellent opportunities for pupils to speak as well as listen to each other help to build their confidence that they can achieve well.
- Pupils understand their improvement targets for literacy and numeracy and are unanimous that lessons are 'really good'.

## Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum for pupils working below the expected level of attainment for their age is outstanding.

- There is a strong emphasis in the curriculum on developing literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills through links with other subjects which makes learning relevant and interests pupils.
- Different groupings, including setting by ability in Years 5 and 6, for literacy and numeracy enables the school to flexibly target resources to those pupils at risk of not attaining the levels expected for their age.
- All pupils receive lessons in touch typing which particularly helps those who have difficulties with writing and pencil control.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, including excellent regular phonics lessons, is extended into Key Stage 1 for pupils who need it.
- Weekly specialist teacher support is provided for phonics development for identified pupils from Years 2 to 6.
- Reading is promoted through a daily carousel of different activities which enables pupils to reach the levels expected for their age and supports those who are at the early stages of learning English.
- The use of drama and the high priority given to speaking and listening activities makes a significant contribution to the excellent personal development and well-being of pupils. As a result they are confident and participate enthusiastically.
- Booster classes are run by teachers and curriculum leaders for pupils who need additional support to reach the levels expected in literacy and numeracy.
- Specific activities are targeted at vulnerable groups. For example, a gardening club is run for pupils at risk of exclusion.
- Pupils who are at risk of not attaining the levels expected for their age are excited by the curriculum and particularly value the wide variety of trips, visitors to the school and competitions.

## Leadership and management of literacy and numeracy

The leadership and management of provision for pupils working below the expected level of attainment for their age are outstanding.

- Leaders are relentless and dogged in ensuring that all pupils reach the levels expected for their age in literacy and numeracy. This is made explicit in the school's closing the gap strategic plan.
- Through uncompromising, shared expectations and good professional development, senior leaders have built excellent capacity at all levels to meet the changing and different needs of pupils.
- Monitoring is systematic and data analysis insightful so evidence based self-evaluation accurately identifies what the school does well and what needs to be developed. Modifications to provision are rooted in ensuring pupils' attainment targets are met.

- Outstanding use is made of pupil performance information to hold staff to account for the standards that pupils reach, particularly those who are identified as at risk of not reaching the levels expected for their age. The progress of these pupils identified in each class is a specific performance management target for the class teachers.
- Specialists are used to provide training to all staff such as in speech and language needs and autistic spectrum disorders.

### English as an additional language

The level of expertise within the school to support pupils with learning English as an additional language is outstanding.

- All teaching assistants have undertaken training in supporting pupils who speak English as an additional language so that support for this group can be fully integrated into class teaching.
- Provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language is coordinated by the senior leader for inclusion.
- The learning mentor has completed the English for speakers of other languages course (ESOL) and works closely with families who are newly arrived in the country.
- Other pupils and families are effectively engaged by the school to support new arrivals who have little or no English.
- External agencies, for example interpreters, are engaged effectively in parents' evenings for those pupils at an early stage of English language acquisition and letters are translated into home languages.

### Inclusion

Inclusion of pupils working below the expected levels of attainment for their age is outstanding.

- Staff are trained in speech and occupational therapy and provide support and guidance to parents of pupils with these particular needs.
- All classes are screened so that pupils' learning needs are identified early and provision, including any additional support, is tailored to ensure they achieve well and attain the levels expected for their age.
- The school works particularly well with parents to overcome barriers to pupils' learning such as poor attendance and punctuality.
- Close links are made with the local provider of support for pupils with emotional and social needs. An outreach worker visits on a weekly basis to support identified pupils. As a result, the school's tracking information shows that these pupils are able to reach the levels expected for their age at the end of Year 6, for example in reading.
- Excellent links with other agencies help support families and pupils experiencing difficulties.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- increasing the proportion of pupils who reach the nationally expected levels in writing.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to narrow the gap for pupils at risk of not reaching the expected level of attainment for their age in 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