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Dear Mr McLauchlin

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 14 November 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 eight parts of lessons.

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 above average. The achievement of pupils below the expected level of attainment for their age is outstanding.

- Half the children who join the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) do not have the skills and knowledge expected for their

age. They make excellent progress and many achieve or exceed their learning goals by the time they enter Year 1 because their individual needs are assessed quickly and accurately. Activities are planned carefully and children are provided with high levels of adult support in small classes.

- The school has focused on literacy and numeracy in Key Stage 1. Standards have risen year-on-year and are now in line with the national average. In 2008 most pupils reached the levels expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Standards are consistently above average at the end of Key Stage 2 but are slightly higher in mathematics than in English.
- All groups of pupils continue to make outstanding progress as they move through the school so that most reach the expected level of attainment for their age in literacy and numeracy by the end of Year 6.
- A large proportion of pupils who did not attain the levels expected for their age in English and mathematics also had records of poor attendance. Individual targets for attendance and punctuality are shared with parents and pupils.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress and their attainment is better than their peers nationally in English and mathematics.

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 good.

- Consistencies in teaching methods and shared high expectations are underpinned by attention to detail so that all pupils attain the levels expected for their age. As a result, pupils make excellent progress and are motivated to learn.
- Pupils are taught in small classes with a full time teaching assistant in the EYFS and Key Stage 1. Very good levels of support make a significant contribution to pupils' positive attitudes to learning, excellent behaviour and achievement.
- From Years 3 to 6 pupils are taught in small ability classes of between 12 and 22 pupils. Those who are at risk of not reaching the levels expected for their age in literacy and numeracy are taught in the smallest classes. This enables pupils to receive the support they need and so make excellent progress in closing the gap in their attainment.
- Tightly structured lessons, consistent, well established classroom routines and an orderly, attractive learning environment are features of the whole school. The most vulnerable pupils and those who are new to the school quickly understand what is expected of them and they settle down to learn.
- Accurate assessments of pupils help teachers to deploy teaching assistants well so that the different needs of pupils within small classes are met.
- Planning is detailed, the pace of learning is maintained well and questioning by adults is good. However, there are missed opportunities

for pupils to question each other, or to develop and explain their ideas. They also say that they would like more variety in their homework tasks.

- Excellent guidance and effective use of displays and checklists in lessons helps pupils to develop good study skills which in turn helps them to work independently.
- Pupils are given the time to read consistently good, meaningful marking which clearly identifies what they have done well and precisely what they need to do to improve. They are given good opportunities to check their work for errors and take a pride in what they produce.
- Pupils and their parents know what levels they are working on and exactly what needs to be done to reach their targets.

Quality of the curriculum

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

- Literacy and numeracy are taught as discrete subjects with a strong focus on pupils reaching the level expected for their age so that they have the skills to understand and enjoy other subjects.
- There is a well established phonics programme and books are sent home to encourage parents to read with their children from the time they start at the school. A phonics workshop for parents supports them with this activity.
- Those pupils who are not reading at the levels expected for their age are supported individually with their reading on a daily basis.
- Writing tasks are sampled every half term. They are used systematically to plan the next stage of learning and inform pupils' individual writing targets.
- There is a specific, daily numeracy activity focused on developing pupils' understanding of basic concepts such as multiplication and number bonds.
- Groups are identified for additional literacy and numeracy support from one of the senior leaders in Year 6 and after school clubs help to build on the learning in English and mathematics lessons.

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.

- Tightly structured leadership with clear and explicit lines of accountability ensure that expectations are understood. There is an uncompromising focus on high standards, consistency and good quality provision to meet the needs of every pupil.
- Monitoring of the quality of teaching is thorough and systematic so staff are provided with regular and comprehensive feedback on their performance.

- Well targeted, relevant training and support is tailored to teachers' individual needs. This ensures that good quality teaching and learning is maintained when there are staff changes.
- The induction programme for newly qualified teachers, who make up approximately one third of the staff and subsidised accommodation on the school site, is offered to new staff.
- Thorough, systematic and robust monitoring of pupil progress is analysed in detail and used effectively to make strategic decisions about how classes are organised and resources deployed. Leadership is focused on ensuring that 'there are no distractions from teaching and learning'.

English as an additional language

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

- Provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language is coordinated by the senior leader for inclusion.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language generally are beyond the early stages of language acquisition. They are provided with dual language books where appropriate and immersed in the language of the classroom. They quickly develop their skills because classes are small and there is good quality interaction and support from the high ratio of adults to pupils.
- Many of the teaching assistants speak English as an additional language and use their own experiences of language acquisition to support pupils.

Inclusion

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

- Pupils are assessed quickly and accurately when they enter the school, including those who join at different times, so that their needs are met effectively.
- Small classes grouped according to ability and careful assessments of pupils help adults plan appropriate tasks and support pupils who are at risk of underachieving.
- Excellently detailed planning, checked weekly, ensures all pupils' needs are met.
- Specialist external support for those pupils with particular needs, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is effective and, as a result, they make excellent progress.
- Teaching assistants are carefully selected and trained, for example, in delivering the phonics programme. This investment ensures they have the skills and knowledge necessary to precisely support all pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- provide more opportunities for pupils to develop and explain their ideas.

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