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Mrs Y Graves
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Graves

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 29 September 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 learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of five part-lessons lessons and two intervention groups led by teaching partners.

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 good.

Achievement and standards

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

- Although children enter the Foundation Stage with skills which are broadly typical for children of that age, their starting points in literacy, and social and personal development are less well developed. Overall, pupils make good progress in literacy and numeracy and reach standards that are above average at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils make least progress in Key Stage 1 and standards in literacy and numeracy at the end of Year 2 are average.
- Pupils on the school's register of special needs, those from minority ethnic groups and pupils whose first language is not English attain higher than similar pupils nationally. They make good progress overall, and often outstanding progress at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Pupils' personal development is excellent. Pupils work and play together exceptionally well, have high self-esteem and show very positive attitudes to their learning.

Quality of teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy

The quality of teaching and learning for pupils working below the expected levels for their age in literacy and numeracy is good.

- Teaching is consistently good and, at the end of Key Stage 2, is sometimes outstanding.
- Where teaching is outstanding, the 'steps for learning', identified in teachers' planning, are sharply focused and help pupils know how to improve.
- Teachers use the results of regular assessments to ensure that work is matched well to the needs of all pupils, including those most vulnerable.
- Excellent relationships in the school help ensure that the climate for learning in lessons is very positive. Classes are calm and orderly.
- The teaching partners are highly skilled and make a valuable contribution to the achievement of vulnerable pupils.
- Although pupils are beginning to develop their skills of evaluating their own learning, this is not yet embedded into all lessons.
- Marking is thorough and detailed and gives helpful advice to pupils on how to improve their work.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum for children working below the levels expected for their age in literacy and numeracy is good.

- All pupils have access to a wide range of stimulating learning opportunities, including use of information and communication technology, which provide motivation and enjoyment, and engage interest.
- High priority is given to pupils' social and emotional development which helps pupils develop high esteem and contributes to positive attitudes to learning.
- The development of a programme for phonics is beginning to have an impact on raising standards and achievement in literacy, but is not yet sufficiently embedded in all years.
- The targeted intervention support strategies make a positive contribution to the academic achievement of vulnerable pupils.

Leadership and management of literacy and numeracy

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

- You have successfully created a strong ethos of care throughout the school. As a consequence, all pupils, especially the most vulnerable, achieve well because they feel valued and have high self-esteem.
- Regular assessments of pupils' progress enables leaders, teachers and support staff to have a thorough knowledge of individual pupils and to target support for those most vulnerable.
- Teachers are held accountable for the progress made by all pupils in their care and challenging targets for improvement are set.
- The quality of teaching and learning and its impact on standards and achievement in literacy and numeracy is monitored rigorously.

English as an additional language

There are no pupils who are currently learning English as an additional language.

Inclusion

Inclusion in literacy and numeracy is good.

- Excellent provision for pupils' personal and social development helps pupils develop a high level of self-esteem and provides a firm foundation for learning.
- Following detailed assessments of academic progress, targeted support in literacy and numeracy is provided for those most vulnerable.
- All groups of pupils make good progress in literacy and numeracy.
- Highly skilled teaching partners make a positive contribution to the achievement of the most vulnerable pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising standards at the end of Key Stage 1
- developing pupils' skills in evaluating their own work
- implementing the plan for the development of phonics and carefully monitoring its impact on pupils' standards and 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

Roy Bowers
Her Majesty's Inspector