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28 January 2009

Ms C Lindsay
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Ms Lindsay

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 27 January 2009 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, governors, parents and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of seven parts of lessons and support 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 exceptionally and consistently high. The achievement of pupils working below the expected level of attainment for their age is outstanding.

- When pupils join the school their skills and knowledge, particularly in communication, language and literacy, are lower than expected for their age.
- The school places a strong emphasis on supporting pupils' personal, social and emotional development from the time they enter the school so that they are ready to learn and behave well.
- At the end of Year 2 in 2008 more pupils than nationally reached the expected levels in reading and mathematics but significantly fewer in writing.
- The gap in attainment between reading and writing closes as pupils move through the school because there is a heavy emphasis on developing pupils' vocabulary and use of language.
- At the end of Year 6 in 2008 all pupils reached the expected level for their age 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 outstanding.

- Lessons are purposeful, focused and build effectively on what each pupil already knows and can do so all are able to experience success and understand how their work will be evaluated.
- Planning is detailed and varied. Practical tasks are carefully matched to the full range of learners' needs so that they achieve well and are motivated to learn.
- There are consistently good opportunities for pupils to talk together, share their ideas and explain their learning strategies which make a significant contribution to their confidence and independence.
- Good questioning by all adults helps pupils to extend their understanding of literacy and numeracy.
- A variety of interesting resources, including, music games and information and communication technology (ICT), enliven lessons and inspire pupils.
- Enjoyment of learning is given a high priority, relationships are very good and pupils take a pride in their work so have positive attitudes and achieve consistently well.
- Marking and the involvement of pupils in setting learning targets in literacy and numeracy help pupils understand what they need to do to improve. Teachers' comments in literacy books are more helpful than in numeracy.

Quality of the curriculum

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

- The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils very well because it is planned in detail to be interesting, practical and relevant.
- The curriculum is constantly modified to meet the different needs of pupils.

- ICT is used creatively to raise expectations and engage pupils.
- A wide range of enrichment activities give pupils real experiences for writing, speaking and listening. As the headteacher said, 'a focus on richness of experience is necessary to acquire a richness of outcomes for pupils'.
- Reading skills are taught systematically from when they start the school and parents are actively supported in helping their children to read regularly at home.
- Opportunities for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects are well established and carefully planned.
- All pupils learn a range of languages which supports the development of their speaking, listening and vocabulary skills.
- Additional provision to help those pupils who need to 'catch up' is effective because it is tailored carefully to their specific needs and delivered by well trained staff.

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.

- Senior leaders are passionate and uncompromising in their expectation that every pupil will reach the levels expected for their age in literacy and numeracy.
- Data is used with precision to ensure that actions taken for improvement are making a discernable difference for pupils.
- There is a strong culture of reflective practice based on mutual support and challenge.
- Change is embraced and encourages staff to take well informed risks to help pupils achieve as well as they can.
- Working in teams of experienced staff helps new staff to quickly understand the school's shared expectations. This organisation contributes significantly to the consistent quality of teaching and learning.
- Teaching assistants and teachers are well trained and deployed effectively so that their skills and expertise are used to best effect.
- Governors are well informed and look closely at the provision and outcomes of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language through their development of an equalities scheme.

English as an additional language

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

- Provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language is co-ordinated by a teacher whose expertise is in languages and includes a qualification in teaching English as a second language.
- Some staff, including the co-ordinator of provision for pupils with English as an additional language, are fluent in a wide range of

languages, including some from Eastern European, so are able to support pupils and their families who have little or no English very effectively.

- Two additional teachers from Eastern Europe provide regular, effective support for pupils at the early stages of English language acquisition. They work closely with class teachers to ensure that language is not a barrier to learning for new arrivals who have little or no English.
- Pupils have access to a good range of dual language and age appropriate resources.
- The school has developed its own detailed set of guidance for teachers in planning precise next learning steps for pupils who speak English as an additional language and are at risk of not reaching the levels expected for their age in literacy.

Inclusion

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

- Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make excellent progress because their needs are identified early, partnerships with parents are strong and support is personalised for their specific needs.
- The school celebrates cultural diversity and works very effectively with a wide range of other agencies to ensure that all pupils are fully included in the life of the school and attain well.
- Pupils are supported effectively in a variety of groupings in class and outside the classroom.
- Pupils who are newly arrived in the country are provided with one to one support and a carefully planned induction programme to help them settle quickly.
- Assessments for pupils who speak English as an additional language who also have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are made in the home language.
- The learning mentor provides effective support for pupils with pastoral needs, including a literacy booster class.
- Funding is used to provide additional specialist support and ICT equipment for pupils with particular needs such as dyslexia. As a consequence, these pupils gain confidence and achieve well.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

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

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