

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Mrs J Laycock  
Headteacher  
St Mary's Catholic Primary School  
Cookham Road  
Maidenhead  
Berkshire  
SL6 7EG

Dear Mrs Laycock

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 28 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 and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of six 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 good.

#### Achievement and standards

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

- Pupils join the school the term after their fifth birthday so some enter directly into Year 1.

- When pupils join the school their skills and knowledge, particularly in communication, language, literacy and mathematics 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 writing although fewer in mathematics.
- Pupils make good progress as they move through the school because their different needs are identified early; they are provided with good quality support; and their progress is tracked carefully.
- At the end of Year 6 in 2008 more pupils than nationally reached the expected level for their age in English and mathematics.
- A range of data is analysed carefully to identify underachievement and overcome barriers to learning. The school's focus on writing has successfully closed the gap with more pupils attaining the expected levels in Year 6 than when they were in Year 2.
- The school has identified that girls attain less well in mathematics than boys in the school and girls nationally.
- Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because their needs are identified early, there are effective links with external specialists and support is matched carefully to their needs.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language also make good progress and attain the levels expected for their age in mathematics but their attainment in English is lower.

### 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.

- Lessons are well structured and expectations are made explicit so pupils work productively and are fully involved in evaluating how well they are learning.
- Teachers know their pupils well and have good subject knowledge so plan an interesting variety of practical activities which motivate pupils.
- Teaching assistants provide effective support for pupils at risk of not reaching the levels expected but the pace of learning sometimes slows when these pupils are not enabled to work with sufficient independence.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to talk together, share their ideas and explain their learning strategies which make a significant contribution to their confidence and personal development.
- Good questioning by adults helps pupils to extend their understanding of literacy and numeracy although there are some missed opportunities to elicit responses from more reluctant pupils, particularly girls.
- A variety of interesting, well organised resources, including games and information and communication technology (ICT), are used effectively to interest and engage pupils.
- Relationships are very good and pupils take a pride in their work so have positive attitudes, enjoy lessons and achieve well.

- Detailed marking and the use of targets in English and mathematics help pupils understand what they need to do to improve and their next learning steps.

## Quality of the curriculum

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

- The curriculum is carefully planned and adapted to meet the needs of all pupils so they achieve well.
- A tightly structured, daily phonics programme and carefully levelled reading resources are introduced from the moment pupils join the school so they quickly acquire early reading skills.
- There is a strong emphasis on the pastoral curriculum and a wide range of enrichment activities so pupils are ready to learn and experience success.
- Speaking, listening and drama are prominent features of the curriculum and are particularly effective at supporting those pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- There are appropriately planned opportunities for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.
- 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.
- ICT is used well to motivate and engage pupils.
- Dual language resources and carefully labelled displays effectively support pupils who speak English as an additional language.

## 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 good.

- Senior leaders have a clear, shared vision and determined focus on raising standards. As the headteacher said, 'we will never be satisfied until every child attains the levels expected'.
- Leaders at all levels are involved in systematically monitoring their subjects so they have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development.
- There is a strong culture of mutual support so staff are reflective, share their expertise and are open to change. This makes a particular contribution to the quality of teaching and learning.
- Expectations are high and performance management is used effectively to hold staff to account for the attainment of specific pupils identified at risk of not reaching the levels expected.
- Clear assessment processes and a detailed hierarchy of intervention and support is well established so staff understand pupils needs well and how to help them.

- A priority is given to training teaching assistants so that they have the skills and expertise to support pupils effectively, for example in developing reading.

## English as an additional language

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

- There is no specific expertise or training undertaken on how to support pupils who speak little or no English in lessons.
- Parents of pupils who are new to the country are invited to spend a day in their child's class to help them understand the school routines.
- Resources and information are provided for parents in their home language if needed.
- Links with local secondary schools are used to help parents understand the process of transfer at the end of Year 6.

## Inclusion

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

- A rapid response to pupils' academic and pastoral needs makes a significant contribution to their good achievement and positive attitudes.
- Effective support is underpinned by good links with a range of external agencies and specialists, although this is not as readily available for the full range of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The provision for pupils with specific additional needs, such as dyslexia, is carefully planned and monitored so pupils make good progress and attain well.
- Daily one-to-one reading support is provided for pupils in Key Stage 2 who find reading difficult so that the large majority reach the levels expected.
- Staff have undertaken training in supporting pupils with speech and language difficulties and specialist resources are used, such as radio microphones, so that pupils are included in lessons.
- Nurture groups for pupils with emotional and behavioural needs are helping them to overcome their barriers to learning and develop confidence.
- Pupils value the support that they provide each other in lessons and on the playground, so feel safe and included.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- increasing the proportion of girls who reach the expected levels in mathematics
- maintaining the pace of learning when pupils are working on activities in lessons with extra support

- increasing staff expertise in how to support pupils who speak English as an additional language so that more attain the levels expected for their age in English.

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