

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)



25 February 2009

Ms A Hardy  
Headteacher  
Lucas Vale Primary School  
Thornville Street  
London  
SE8 4QB

Dear Ms Hardy

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 24 February 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 eight 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 below average. The achievement of pupils working below the expected level of attainment for their age is outstanding.

- Pupils join the school with very low literacy, numeracy, social, emotional and communication skills.
- 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.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 are exceptionally low in reading, writing and mathematics and fewer pupils than nationally reach the levels expected for their age.
- Pupils' academic and pastoral needs are identified quickly and additional support is carefully targeted so they make excellent progress to close the attainment gap by the end of Year 6.
- Although standards in 2008 at the end of Year 6 were below average in English and mathematics the proportion of pupils who reached the levels expected for their age was similar to that found nationally, except in writing.
- Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make excellent progress and attain standards that are in line with or better than their peers nationally. This is because they are given high levels of support and partnerships with parents are strong.
- A carefully planned induction process for the large number of pupils who join the school other than in the nursery or reception helps them to settle quickly so most attain the levels expected in literacy and numeracy.

### 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 planned and provide practical, varied activities to meet the pupils' different needs so pupils work productively.
- Relationships are strong: pupils feel safe, are keen to take part in lessons and have positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils enjoy school, particularly working in small groups but say that some lessons, for example in literacy, are 'a bit boring' and they would like them to be 'more lively and real'.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to discuss and share their ideas which develops their confidence.
- Pupils' achievements and contributions are valued which motivates them and makes a particular contribution to their personal development and well-being. One pupil stated, 'The school makes us feel really special'.
- Classroom routines are understood and expectations are clear so pupils behave well and the pace of learning is maintained.
- Teaching assistants are used very effectively to support learning in lessons and small group activities.
- Marking consistently praises pupils' efforts and generally tells pupils how to improve.

## Quality of the curriculum

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

- The carefully planned curriculum meets the needs of pupils at risk of not reaching the levels expected for their age. Gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding are effectively closed.
- A priority to develop pupils' personal, social and emotional skills results in their readiness to learn and helps to overcome remaining barriers.
- There is a structured, whole school approach to the teaching of phonics to help pupils quickly acquire early reading skills.
- The school has introduced a more creative curriculum to make learning relevant and provide opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.
- Visiting authors are used as role models for writing and educational visits help to develop pupils' language skills.
- Pupils are set by ability for some mathematics lessons in Key Stage 2 to allow more closely targeted teaching of key mathematical skills and to close any gaps in knowledge, for example of new arrivals to the school.
- Pupils particularly enjoy weekly enrichment workshops that include a wide variety of activities, including cooking and basket weaving, which contributes to their enjoyment, personal development and language 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.

- A culture of self-evaluation which is constantly seeking to improve is driven by reflective leaders and practitioners who are open to change.
- Initiatives for improvement are carefully considered and trialled to ensure they provide value and have an impact on learning before being integrated into the whole school.
- Expectations are high, leaders have an insightful understanding of the potential of staff and ensure they are provided with good support and training.
- Senior and middle leaders are clear about their roles and responsibilities, understand the strengths and areas for development in literacy and numeracy and are focused on overcoming barriers to learning.
- Monitoring and tracking are systematic and detailed so leaders are well informed and hold staff to account through performance management for the progress and attainment of pupils, including those identified as at risk of not reaching the levels expected for their age.

- Leaders have created a calm, caring learning community for its pupils and their parents so they feel welcomed and supported.

## 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 co-ordinated by a teacher who has a qualification in English language training and speaks additional languages.
- The induction mentor is trained in how to work with parents of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- Staff have been provided with training from the local authority and other specialists on how to support pupils who speak English as an additional language in class.
- Family learning courses are run for parents whose first language is not English, dual language books are provided and translators are accessed if needed.
- Pupils and members of the local community are used when appropriate to support new arrivals who speak little or no English.

## Inclusion

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

- Strong links with parents and the community, for example through the work of the induction mentor and family learning groups, make a significant contribution to the inclusion of every pupil and help them overcome varied and complex barriers to learning.
- The school understands the cultural, social and emotional diversity of its pupils and their families and works very effectively with a wide range of other agencies and specialists so that all pupils are fully included and attain well.
- The school 'goes the extra mile' to be welcoming and supportive of pupils and their families which makes a strong contribution to the harmonious, cohesive school community.
- A wide range of additional support programmes are provided by well trained staff to help pupils 'catch up'.
- Additional support is tailored to pupils' specific needs and monitored regularly.
- Year 6 pupils and their parents are provided with individual support from senior leaders to help them make a smooth transition to secondary education.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- increasing the proportion of pupils who reach the expected levels in literacy and numeracy by the end of Year 2 and in writing by the end of Year 6

- expanding the use of more relevant curriculum activities so that lessons are increasingly lively and engaging.

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