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Mr T Canning
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Canning

Ofsted 2009-10 survey inspection programme: good practice in literacy

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 2 December 2009 to look at work in literacy.

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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: discussions with the chair of governors, senior leaders, the inclusion team, the literacy coordinators, parents and pupils, a scrutiny of school documentation and observation of four lessons.

Features of good practice

- You set very high expectations at Tollgate. Your highly skilful leadership and management enable all staff to work together effectively to provide an inclusive culture for learning, which is focused firmly on standards. Consequently, pupils' achievement in literacy is outstanding.
- You provide an imaginative curriculum, securely underpinned by regular teaching of the basic skills in reading, spelling and writing. This enables all pupils, particularly the most vulnerable, to attain standards that are in line with or above the national average for their age.
- The monitoring of literacy is of an exceptionally high quality which ensures consistency in practice across all classes. As a result, all pupils are given an equal opportunity to succeed.
- Pupils' progress is monitored effectively. Interventions are managed well by the inclusion team and adapted appropriately to meet pupils' needs.

- The quality of teaching observed was of a high order. Teachers are imaginative in planning lessons which engage pupils' interest alongside developing their literacy skills. For example, in an outstanding Year 3 lesson, the teacher presented a short video of herself making an erupting volcano, demonstrating deliberate mistakes in her grammar. The pupils enjoyed identifying the mistakes, such as the wrong use of time connectives and adverbs. As a result, they used these elements exceptionally well in their own instructional writing.
- Pupils know exactly what they are expected to achieve in literacy. They understand their reading and writing targets, which are used effectively by all staff to guide learning.
- Parents appreciate the clarity of the regular formal pupil progress reports. They commented that even if they struggle with literacy themselves, the reports enable them to discuss progress with their child confidently and to ask the teacher for additional help.
- Pupils who attend the unit for children with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder are included well. Teaching all pupils in the school to sign demonstrates the importance you attach to good communication skills.
- The children's centre, which is run and managed by the school, is enabling parents to help their children with literacy effectively. Parents appreciate the Friday story sessions, reading clubs, family literacy and speech and language classes. The focus on securing high-quality literacy activities from birth through to Reception is having a very positive impact on the standards reached by four- and five-year-olds in writing.

Areas for development

- We identified the need to strengthen links with local secondary schools to ensure that the progress made in literacy, particularly by vulnerable pupils, is sustained.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop literacy in the school.

As I explained previously, 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

Gill Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector