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Mrs C Cox
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Cox

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 to overcome pupils' socio-economic barriers to attain or exceed nationally expected levels for their age 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 senior leaders; observation of three lessons and an intervention session; meetings with two groups of pupils; and scrutiny of the school's documentation and assessment data.

Features of good practice

- The school has a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and supports them through a wide range of intervention strategies. These are effective in developing pupils' personal and emotional well-being. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their opportunities to participate in the Forest School initiative and life skills. The school is particularly successful in supporting pupils with challenging behaviour to extend their concentration span and develop their social skills.
- In lessons, helpful prompt sheets identify the common features of a good piece of writing. These ensure pupils have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. Pupils use these prompt sheets confidently to assess their own work and identify areas for development.

- In an outstanding lesson, a clearly planned sequence of activities built swiftly on pupils' learning. The teacher modelled learning techniques well and set high expectations. Pupils quickly applied their learning using demanding technical vocabulary in their oral responses.
- Teachers' marking consistently identifies errors and underlying misconceptions. Written comments help pupils to identify the precise steps to improve their work. Pupils are familiar with this approach and especially appreciate the use of colour to highlight that the teacher is 'tickled pink' with their work. Marking helps pupils to take increasing responsibility for following up on advice offered and improving their work.

Areas for development

- The school has introduced a number of approaches to improving pupils' writing which include: using display to immediately record good examples; detailed writing targets; visual prompts and word banks; and providing opportunities for pupils to gain direct experience of the outdoor environment to stimulate language work. At present, however, the school's monitoring of writing lacks sufficient detail to evaluate the relative impact of each of these various approaches on pupils' progress in English.
- Ensure that staff delivering literacy intervention activities are clear about the purpose of each session, precisely evaluate the effectiveness of each session and use the information collected to plan future activities.
- Build closer relationships with parents of targeted pupils so that they can help their children make better progress in reading.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop literacy learning 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

Mark Lindfield
Her Majesty's Inspector