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Mr B Beresford  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Beresford

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 02 October 2008 to look at work in literacy and numeracy.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of literacy and numeracy, the 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 considered the level of expertise within the school to support pupils 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 five part-lessons.

The overall effectiveness of provision to narrow the gap in literacy and numeracy was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement in literacy and numeracy is outstanding and standards are well above average.

- The vast majority of pupils reach at least the standard expected for their age by the time they leave the school and a higher than average proportion exceed this level.
- High standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have been maintained over several years.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have risen in recent years and are now well above average. However, there has been more year to year fluctuation in writing than in reading or mathematics.
- In the Foundation Stage children's phonic skills, have improved considerably.
- Many of the 'borderline' pupils who attend six weeks of daily booster classes in English and mathematics make better than expected progress over this time and, as a result, reach the nationally expected standard for 11-year-olds.
- Pupils' personal development is outstanding. By Year 6 they are thoughtful about their own learning. They show a high degree of commitment to achievement; have the confidence to try demanding work; and to seek help when they need it. This reflects the school's successful focus on promoting self-esteem and independence in learning.

#### Quality of teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy

The quality of teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy is outstandingly effective.

- Much of the teaching is good and some is of an outstanding quality.
- The most effective teaching is founded on excellent relationships; clear and precise objectives for what pupils are to learn in the lesson; very clear, methodical explanations of new work; and skilful adjustment of the level of challenge to match pupils' wide range of capability. In these lessons pupils are confident learners and they make rapid progress.
- The satisfactory teaching seen was slower paced and less sharply focused.
- The one-to-one support for pupils who need extra help is of good quality.
- There is some very good marking and older pupils are involved well in evaluating their understanding of new work; they find this very helpful.
- Pupils know their teachers want them to do well and will help them through any problems they have with learning. They value this very good support highly.

#### Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum for literacy and numeracy is good.

- The curriculum in English and mathematics covers all that is required and supports pupils' achievement.

- The school provides a good range of effective interventions to help pupils with particular learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, and to enable any who are slipping behind to catch up.
- In the Foundation Stage a new approach to teaching phonics, in line with government recommendations, has been successfully introduced. As a result, children are making better progress in acquiring the phonic skills they need for reading and writing.
- There are some good examples of work that incorporates several subjects and provides planned opportunities for pupils to use and develop literacy and numeracy skills in a range of meaningful contexts. However, such cross-curricular work is not widespread.

## Leadership and management

The leadership and management of provision to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are good.

- The senior team is strongly focused on continuing to raise standards and achievement and they keep an eye on how well the organisation of teaching groups enables all pupils to achieve.
- The subject leaders for English and mathematics are new to these roles. They are keen to develop their subjects and to identify and tackle aspects that could be improved. Planning for improvement identifies appropriate focus areas but is not always clear how success will be judged.
- The school sets targets for pupils and keeps track of their progress from year to year. A promising development is the linking of these targets to teachers' performance management. However, senior staff and subject leaders have few systems to check on pupils' progress during each year so cannot be certain that any underachievement will be picked up soon enough.

## English as an additional language

The school has a small number of bilingual pupils but none who are learning English as an additional language. Therefore no judgment has been made on the level of expertise within the school to support such pupils.

## Inclusion

Inclusion in literacy and numeracy is outstanding.

- There is a high level of commitment among the staff to help all pupils to do as well as possible.
- The school deploys staff resources effectively to organise large Key Stage 2 year groups into various groups and ability sets for some lessons. The arrangements for placing pupils in teaching groups are sufficiently flexible. They are kept under review and there are examples of pupils moving between sets and making very good progress.

- Decisions about how best to provide additional help for pupils are well-considered and take very good account of the impact on pupils' growing independence and confidence. As a consequence, the emphasis has moved from withdrawing pupils from class lessons to meeting pupils' needs in class and providing short sessions of one-to-one support for those with particular learning difficulties.
- Pupils recognise the school's very inclusive nature. They say it is 'a really good school for helping people'.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving standards of writing in Key Stage 1
- improving the systems to enable senior staff and subject leaders to keep track of pupils' progress during each year.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop 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

Pat Kime  
Her Majesty's Inspector