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Mr J Gale
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Dear Mr Gale

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 8 December 2008 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 learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two intervention sessions and part-lessons in four year groups.

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

- Pupils enter into the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills which are broadly typical for children of a similar age. When pupils leave at the end of Year 6, standards are exceptionally high in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those from minority ethnic groups and pupils whose first language is not English, attain higher than similar pupils nationally and achieve exceptionally well.
- Personal development of all pupils, including those most vulnerable is outstanding. Pupils show excellent attitudes to their learning. They cooperate well, develop a very good level of independence and grow in self-esteem.
- Vulnerable pupils say that they value the care and attention they receive.

Quality of teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy

The quality of teaching and learning for pupils working below the expected levels for their age in literacy and numeracy is outstanding.

- The quality of teaching is consistently high throughout the school.
- Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievements.
- All groups of pupils are challenged exceptionally well because pupils' work is carefully matched to their abilities.
- A high adult to pupil ratio enabling additional and focused support is given to those pupils who are not reaching the expected levels for their age.
- The pace of learning in lessons is brisk and helps pupils maintain interest and motivation.
- Classes are calm and orderly enabling all pupils to focus on their learning.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the achievement of all pupils, especially those who are most vulnerable.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are excellent.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum for children working below the levels expected for their age in literacy and numeracy is outstanding.

- Personalised intervention programmes are highly effective in supporting pupils who are not reaching expected levels.
- High priority is given to pupils' social and emotional development. This helps pupils develop high esteem and contributes to their very positive attitudes to learning.
- Many opportunities are taken for pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.

- The curriculum is modified well to take into account the needs of vulnerable pupils.
- Interactive White Boards are used well to stimulate and motivate pupils in lessons. The school has a detailed plan to enable all classes to use a variety of information and communication technology (ICT) resources to support the development of pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy.

Leadership and management of literacy and numeracy

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

- You and other leaders have successfully created a common vision based upon high expectations and a relentless pursuit of excellence.
- Careful and regular monitoring of pupils' progress and quality of provision ensures that pupils who are in danger of not achieving their age related expectations are provided with highly focused support.
- Excellent use of information about pupils' progress enables senior leaders to hold staff to account for the progress made by the pupils.

English as an additional language

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

- The supportive ethos of the school helps pupils who are learning English as an additional language settle in quickly and well.
- Although some staff have received local authority training, there is not a deep knowledge of this aspect within the school.
- Additional language development opportunities and individual support are provided for pupils who are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language.

Inclusion

Inclusion in literacy and numeracy is outstanding.

- The achievement of vulnerable pupils in literacy and numeracy is outstanding.
- The personal, social and emotional development of vulnerable pupils is outstanding and provides a firm foundation for learning.
- Regular assessments and careful tracking of the progress made by vulnerable pupils in literacy and numeracy helps teachers monitor the effectiveness of support and modify if necessary.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- implementing the plan to develop literacy and numeracy skills through a variety of ICT resources.

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

Roy Bowers
Her Majesty's Inspector