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Ms Holmes  
Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Holmes

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 1 December 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 documentation provided by the school and pupils; work and visits to six lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement in literacy and numeracy is good.

- Standards, by Year 6, are above average overall. Standards vary from year to year but, in the last two years, the vast majority of pupils have reached at least the standard expected for their age by the end of Key

Stage 2. This is a very good achievement and it means that pupils are well-prepared for secondary school.

- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have risen significantly in the last three years.
- A good number of pupils with learning difficulties reach an average standard by Year 6 and the school can point to some tremendous success stories, with individual pupils making exceptional progress in the later years of Key Stage 2, particularly in reading.
- The standards achieved at the end of Key Stage 2 represent very good progress from a low starting point, particularly in early reading writing, and mathematics. Many pupils start in Nursery or later with little or no knowledge of English.
- Children make very good progress in the Nursery and Reception and, by the time they start Year 1, about half of them have reached the standard expected for their age.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are below average but there was improvement in 2008, particularly in mathematics. The work seen in Year 2 English books and in a mathematics lesson suggests that most of the Year 2 pupils are set to reach at least an average level for their age.
- Pupils' outstanding personal development makes an important contribution to their achievement. They flourish in the school's positive ethos in which each child is highly valued and is nurtured as an individual. By Year 6 pupils have developing into mature, responsible youngsters who are confident learners.
- In all the lessons seen, pupils were very well-behaved. They worked very hard with a real determination to succeed. They co-operated very well when working in pairs or small groups and showed a very good degree of independence.

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

The quality of teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy is good.

- The standards reached and the work in pupils' books show that teaching is very effective.
- Common strengths of the teaching were evident in excellent relationships; clear learning objectives which are matched well to the range of pupils capabilities; and high expectations of what pupils can achieve. The difficulties and disadvantages faced by many pupils are seen as challenges to overcome, not excuses.
- In the most effective teaching, teachers' very good subject knowledge enables them to explain and demonstrate new work clearly and to focus well on the most important aspects to push learning on. In satisfactory lessons, the pace of learning is slower.
- Staff check pupils' day to day progress carefully against the objectives for lessons. Pointers for improvement are given in discussions with pupils but it is rarer for marking to include individually tailored targets for individual pupils to refer to.
- There are examples, notably in Year 6, of very well developed use of assessment to inform decisions about short-term support to help pupils

who have found a particular aspect of their work difficult, so they can keep up. However, such practice is not consistent across the school. In Key Stage 2, not all teachers have had additional training in teaching the early stages of reading and writing.

- Teaching assistants are well-trained and they work in close partnership with teachers. Their good teaching, within lessons and for small withdrawal groups, makes a very positive contribution to pupils' learning, especially for those who have learning difficulties and those who are learning English as an additional language.
- Pupils for whom English is an additional language benefit from 'preview' sessions for some lessons, which familiarise them with relevant new vocabulary so they can participate fully in the class lesson.

### Quality of the curriculum

The quality of provision for literacy and numeracy is good. Provision to narrow the attainment gap is particularly effective.

- The curriculum in English and mathematics covers all that is required and supports pupils' achievement well.
- The broader curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to broaden their horizons. This builds pupils' confidence and aids their understanding of what they read.
- Staff are determined that pupils will achieve and the school provides a good range of effective tailored interventions to meet pupils' different needs. Interventions in the later years of Key Stage 2 are particularly successful and the school's records show they result in some very rapid progress.
- The school is exploring ways to provide enhanced opportunities for pupils to develop and use literacy skills across subjects through a more integrated curriculum.

### Leadership and management

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

- The subject leaders for English and mathematics are members of the senior staff team. They have a good grasp of assessment data and what it shows about standards and pupils' progress throughout the school. They are committed to continuing to develop teaching and the curriculum in their subjects and they contribute fully to the whole-school improvement planning and determining priorities.
- The use of assessment at whole-school level has improved but there is more to do to ensure the information is easily to access and analyse.
- The school has benefited from participation in the 'Intensifying support programme'. This has been a key factor underpinning improved achievement and standards.

## English as an additional language

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

- Staff have benefited from additional training so all have sufficient skill to meet the needs of pupils in their classes for whom English is an additional language.
- The teacher who leads and co-ordinates provision for these pupils is well-informed and trained.
- When pupils join the school, their English is assessed carefully and appropriate extra teaching provided to help them achieve fluency.
- The parents of pupils for whom English is an additional language are helped to support their children's school work.

## Inclusion

Inclusion in literacy and numeracy is good.

- This is a school where staff 'go the extra mile' to enable pupils to achieve. This is evident in the high quality of pastoral care that supports pupils' personal development and in the high level of additional provision for pupils who need a bit extra to help them keep up or to catch up.
- The school's success in enabling a high proportion of pupils to reach the level expected for their age is strong evidence of its inclusive nature.
- A family support worker contributes to the school's outreach but it is too soon to judge the impact of this on pupils' achievement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- further refining the use of assessment and embedding recent developments
- developing rigorous plans for the use and development of pupils' literacy skills, particularly speaking and listening and writing, in other subjects.

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