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Mrs K Willis
Headteacher
St James' Church of England Primary
School
Old Jamaica Road
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Dear Mrs Willis

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 3 November 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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: discussions with the chair of governors, parents, senior leaders and the literacy coordinator; meetings with pupils; scrutiny of school documentation; and observation of lessons, activities and clubs.

Features of good practice observed

- Your vision, shared by the staff, of a curriculum based on high-quality speaking, listening, reading and writing activities is paramount in enabling all pupils, particularly those who are most vulnerable, to gain success in literacy.
- You set high expectations for all pupils. Poverty is not used as an excuse for underachievement. Pupils' progress in reading and writing is monitored thoroughly. Pupils' achievement in literacy is outstanding and the attainment of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above that found nationally.
- The teaching I observed was outstanding. For example, pupils in Year 2 were entranced by *Harry and the robot*. The teacher's skilful dramatisation

of the story enabled vulnerable pupils to become confident in using adjectives they learnt during the lesson in their writing.

- The outstanding curriculum is relevant to children's knowledge and extends their life experience. For example, the study of climate change in Year 6 stimulated high-quality debate. Sensitively chosen resources and space for drama activities in the classroom, such as the Greenpeace news desk, enabled pupils to become fully immersed in their work and to confidently produce highly emotive writing in different genres.
- Staff model spoken language effectively. Pupils appreciate staff correcting their grammar and self-correct when speaking formally to adults. The pupils interviewed gave good examples of local colloquialisms they avoid in speech and in their writing.
- Pupils say they love reading and eagerly attend the school's reading clubs. Year 6 pupils take their responsibility as reading buddies seriously, regularly using their lunchtimes to help younger pupils learn to read. All pupils observed read confidently, using different voices to express emotion and responding well to punctuation. They say they 'love being read to by teachers because they make stories come to life'. The school has a rich selection of books and all pupils read out loud daily.
- Literacy is managed well. The coordinator has excellent subject knowledge shared effectively with staff. Clear policies for reading, spelling and handwriting are applied consistently across the school.
- You target the extensive extended school activities well to meet the needs of all pupils, particularly the most vulnerable.
- Partnerships are used effectively to support pupils' learning. You are imaginative in gaining support from local businesses and make good use of the culturally rich local environment to raise pupils' aspirations.

Areas for development

- Provide further opportunities and space for developing family literacy, particularly where parents can learn alongside their children.

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