

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr R Bain
Headteacher
Sandhill View School
Grindon Lane
Thorney Close
Sunderland
SR3 4EN

Dear Mr Bain

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 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 made included: observations of three lessons; discussions with you and members of your leadership team; discussions with colleagues responsible for different aspects of literacy; discussions with a small group of students; and an examination of a range of school documentation.

Features of good practice

- You and your leadership team give the highest priority to improving students' progress in literacy. You convey an exceptionally well-informed knowledge and understanding of the specific literacy challenges faced by many students on entry. Your support for staff and material resources to tackle literacy issues confirms their priority in the school.
- Those colleagues who have leadership and management responsibilities for developing literacy support your efforts extremely well. The quality and impact of the programmes they deliver reflects their exemplary commitment.
- The school's reading intervention programme is of an exceptionally high standard. Its thorough and extensive use of assessment accurately identifies those needing help and how best to help them. The frequent

access to independent reading for all students in English lessons makes an important contribution to progress in literacy.

- Students I met who attend the reading intervention programme were keen to point out how it helps them in other lessons, particularly in their ability to understand questions better in subject tests and so reach higher levels.
- Students make strong progress in English. The department's enthusiastic and committed involvement in delivering the reading programme is highly beneficial. The consistently challenging focus on improving the students writing, especially the accuracy and range of their written sentences, is having a positive impact on their progress. The teachers' modelling of good practice in writing and their feedback to students are of a high quality.
- The provision of a nurture-group setting for vulnerable students helps them to make good progress in a safe and supportive environment.

Areas for development

- We discussed ways of improving how the school checks on the impact of its work to develop literacy across all subjects. We also considered how to build on the students' frequent access to reading in school to encourage more regular reading in their own time.

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

Chris Griffin
Additional Inspector