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Mrs L Webster  
Headteacher  
Thornton Junior School  
Thornton Road  
Ward End  
Birmingham  
B8 2LQ

Dear Mrs Webster

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 25 January 2010 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 discussions with senior leaders, observation of three lessons and a meeting with a group of pupils to discuss their work. I also studied the school's literacy policies and assessment data.

#### Features of good practice

- You have very high expectations of staff and pupils at Thornton. Your leadership and management have established a culture where everyone is committed to securing the best possible outcomes for all pupils, regardless of ability and personal circumstances.
- You and other school leaders keep a sharp focus on maintaining high standards in literacy within a rich curriculum that the pupils thoroughly enjoy. Each half-term, senior leaders and teachers review how well pupils are progressing in reading and writing. As a result, pupils in danger of stalling in their progress are identified early and appropriate support is provided for them.
- Almost all of the pupils speak English as an additional language. Teaching and non-teaching staff expertly meet their needs and, by the end of Year 6, standards are high in reading and writing. In the statutory tests at the

end of Year 6 in 2009, 98% of pupils attained the expected level and close to half attained Level 5 in English.

- Boys and pupils entitled to free school meals attain above the national average for all pupils in English.
- The school has very strong systems of pastoral care. A team of well-qualified and experienced staff deals exceptionally well with personal, social and emotional matters that are potential barriers to achieving well.
- Teachers' marking identifies errors and underlying misconceptions. Written comments help pupils to identify the precise steps to improve their work. Marking helps pupils to take increasing responsibility for following up the advice offered and improving their work.
- The quality of teaching observed was outstanding. Teachers deliver imaginative lessons that capture the pupils' imaginations and develop their literacy skills. For example, in an outstanding Year 6 lesson, the teacher played the role of a witch, including costume, as a stimulus to for spoken and written language work.
- Pupils are full of praise for their school. They know exactly what they are expected to achieve in literacy. They understand their reading and writing targets, which are used effectively by all staff to guide learning.

#### Areas for development

- We discussed strategies the school could develop to ensure the outstanding literacy practice observed in Years 3 and 6 is successfully developed in the new Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 classes.

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 Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Anthony O'Malley  
Her Majesty's Inspector