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Ms W Mortimer-Lee and Ms J Lewis  
Co-headteachers  
Riverside Primary School  
Janeway Street  
London  
SE16 4PS

Dear Ms Mortimer-Lee and Ms Lewis

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 10 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 pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of nine parts of lessons and support group activities.

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. Standards are above average. The achievement of pupils below the expected level of attainment for their age is outstanding.

- Children enter the school with skills and knowledge below that expected for their age.

- Support has been successfully targeted at developing children's social and emotional skills in the Early Year Foundation Stage (EYFS). By the time children enter Year 1 these skills have improved to the level expected of their age.
- Improving the ability of children to link letters and sounds by the time they enter Year 1 is a priority for the school. An intensive phonics programme has been introduced and the gap between the expected levels is closing.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 are improving. In 2008 more pupils than nationally reached the expected levels in writing and mathematics. The proportion reaching the expected levels in reading was the same as that found nationally.
- Pupils make outstanding progress as they move through the school. In 2008 all pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, reached the standards expected for their age in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Fewer pupils reached the expected levels in writing compared to reading. This is one of the school's priorities for improvement.
- Although there is no pattern of underachievement the school has identified that social and emotional difficulties linked to high levels of social deprivation are the most significant barriers to learning.
- Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress and reach the expected levels of attainment for their age by the time they leave the school.
- Challenging targets in English and mathematics are exceeded.

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

The quality of teaching and learning for pupils working below the expected level of attainment for their age is outstanding.

- There are excellent relationships and high expectations so pupils are keen to learn, enthusiastic and behave extremely well.
- Well established classroom routines; a purposeful working atmosphere; and an orderly, attractive learning environment help pupils, particularly those with emotional and behavioural needs, to feel safe, confident and ready to learn.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use assessment information carefully to plan interesting, varied, practical activities which are carefully matched to pupils' different needs.
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide excellent levels of support and challenge for pupils at risk of not attaining the expected levels for their age.
- The pace of learning is brisk and well managed. Pupils are encouraged to think before they respond to questions and are given time to read the teacher's comments written in their books.
- Marking in literacy provides good guidance for pupils on what they need to do to improve their work but there are some grammar and spelling errors.
- Pupils understand their improvement targets for reading and writing and are unanimous that lessons are 'fun'.

## Quality of the curriculum

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

- The curriculum is relevant and practical so it engages and excites pupils at risk of not reaching the levels expected for their age. As one said, 'We get a lot of fun and hard things to do'.
- Good links with other subjects are being developed so that pupils have regular opportunities to use their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Different groupings, including setting by ability twice a week in Key Stage 2 for literacy and numeracy, enables the school to flexibly target resources to meet the needs of pupils.
- Carefully planned, dedicated time for extended writing and sustained reading each week is having a significant impact on raising standards in English.
- Regular, intensive phonics teaching by teaching assistants is provided for pupils who need additional support to develop their reading skills.
- Booster classes are run for all Year 6 pupils after school and contracts signed with parents to ensure regular attendance. Pupils are grouped by ability so that those at risk of not reaching the levels expected in literacy and numeracy are well supported.
- Breakfast club in May offers yoga sessions for Year 6 pupils and personal, social and health education (PSHE) is planned carefully to support pupils in managing their emotions and concerns at particular times, for example when transferring to secondary school.
- There are excellent links with local businesses and the community to support pupils, including the most vulnerable, to develop their literacy and social skills.
- Good quality and varied resources, such as play scripts used in guided reading, motivate and engage pupils, particularly those who find learning difficult.

## Leadership and management of literacy and numeracy

The leadership and management of provision for pupils working below the expected level of attainment for their age are outstanding.

- Strong leadership by the co-headteachers, who are excellent role models for all staff, is driving improvement. They teach groups and individual pupils who have been identified as at risk of not reaching the levels expected for their age.
- Systems are well organised, focus on the detail of provision and are monitored robustly so leaders know precisely what works well and what needs to be changed.
- Change is rooted in a thorough analysis of regular assessment and systematic monitoring information. New initiatives are selected wisely and carefully adapted to meet the pupils' needs.
- A strong culture of respect based on team work, mutual support and challenge to constantly improve pervades the school. Clarity about

roles and responsibilities enables staff to be held to account for the standards that all pupils reach.

- Good opportunities for staff to share their expertise by working in teams, teaching different year and ability groups and leading staff training ensure staff have the skills necessary to support all pupils including the most vulnerable pupils.
- Pupils receive the support they need quickly through excellent links with external agencies.

## English as an additional language

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

- The teacher with overall responsibility for pupils who speak English as an additional language is an accredited teacher of English as a foreign language (TEFL) and has a qualification in the acquisition of language.
- A higher level teaching assistant (HLTA) is trained specifically to support pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- All staff have undertaken training in supporting pupils in class who are at the early stages of English language acquisition.
- The school provides support for parents, including those who speak little or no English, through a six-weekly parent group.
- There are a good range of multi-language resources and parents who need it are provided with a translation service or support from parents who speak the same mother tongue.

## Inclusion

Inclusion of pupils working below the expected levels of attainment for their age is outstanding.

- The curriculum is specifically planned and monitored to include the needs of pupils who are not able to access the National Curriculum at the levels appropriate for their age so that all are fully included in lessons.
- Pupils are provided with high levels of support in lessons and small group activities by well trained, knowledgeable staff so achieve extremely well from their low starting points to attain the standards expected for their age.
- Teaching assistants with particular responsibility for supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well trained by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO).
- Pupils are assessed quickly and plans to meet their individual needs are extremely detailed, well structured and include a daily schedule of support.
- The learning mentor is a qualified teacher who works very effectively with other staff, parents and external agencies to provide particular support for pupils with social and emotional difficulties so that they are able to make good progress and reach the standards expected.

- Staff are trained in speech and occupational therapy so can provide support and guidance to pupils with these particular needs.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- increasing the proportion of pupils who reach the nationally expected levels in writing at Key Stage 2
- ensure marking is accurate and provides pupils with a good model of grammar and punctuation.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to narrow the gap for pupils at risk of not reaching the expected level of attainment for their age in 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

Jackie Krafft  
Her Majesty's Inspector