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Mrs S Schanda  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Schanda

### **Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: English**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 21 and 22 September 2010 to look at work in English.

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 included: interviews with staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is satisfactory.

### **Achievement in English**

Achievement in English is satisfactory.

- Attainment in English is average. In 2010, GCSE results showed significant improvement. Over the last three years, the gap in the performance of boys and girls has widened.
- Students' progress is inconsistent. In 2008, progress was satisfactory and in 2009 students underachieved significantly. The 2010 results provide convincing evidence that Year 11 students made satisfactory progress. The school's analysis indicates that girls made better progress than boys. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to others.
- Achievement is satisfactory in the sixth form. In 2009, A-level results were broadly average and students made satisfactory progress. In 2010, only

four students took A-level English Literature and AS results are subject to review.

### **Quality of teaching in English**

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- As a result of more stable staffing and a more focused approach to meeting students' learning needs, teaching has improved. Most teaching is characterised by good relationships. Lessons are presented with energy and clarity. Objectives and assessment criteria are used well at the beginning and during the lesson. Good planning results in a developmental sequence of learning. Occasionally, imaginative devices are used which increase enjoyment and reward the correct learning. Teaching assistants provide well-focused support for individuals.
- On occasion, lessons are too task-focused and opportunity for reflection and discussion is not sufficient. Sometimes teachers miss opportunities to use the structure of the activity to invite expressive oral contributions from students.
- Effective assessment at Key Stage 4 has led to improved achievement. At Key Stage 3, students are assessed frequently and they know what they need to do to reach their annual targets. Marking is regular and constructive. The recent review of Key Stage 3 assessments indicates that third party moderation is needed to assure the accuracy of assessment.
- Teaching in the sixth form provides a good variety of activities that engage students. Teachers provide expert commentary that extends students' understanding of language and literature. On occasion, planning and time management allow activities to go on for too long. The promptness and frequency with which students receive feedback on their progress in English is inconsistent.

### **Quality of the curriculum in English**

The quality of the curriculum in English is satisfactory.

- At Key Stage 4, the quality of the English curriculum is good. The provision of early entry in Year 10 has been instrumental in sharpening the precision of teaching and learning in Year 11. The clear focus on assessment requirements for coursework, examinations and speaking and listening has led to improved attainment and progress.
- Drama and media specialists in the department enhance the English curriculum. Wider reading is promoted well through the library lesson and in the study of particular texts.
- At Key Stage 3, medium-term plans outline teaching strategies for Year 7 but these have not yet been completed for Years 8 and 9. Some texts have already been studied in the primary school.

- Extra-curricular activities, such as visits to the theatre and visits by writers, are sporadic and not integrated into the curriculum.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management in English**

Leadership and management in English are satisfactory.

- Senior leaders have worked closely and effectively with the head of department, and this has resulted in improved achievement at Key Stage 4.
- The department is making more effective use of data to analyse student progress. However, in its self evaluation, it does not take sufficiently strong ownership of data analysis to initiate and drive improvement.
- Priorities are identified accurately but have not been translated into an action plan with timescales, success criteria and responsibilities.
- The leadership and planning of the curriculum and assessment at Key Stage 3 lack sufficient direction and guidance.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- Raising attainment and increasing the progress of students, especially boys, by:
  - improving the planning of the Key Stage 3 curriculum and assuring the accuracy of assessment
  - strengthening the use of data analysis
  - increasing the rigour of self evaluation and action planning.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop English in the school.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**Bernard Campbell**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**