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25 November 2010

Mrs Bernadette Wood
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Wood

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 15 November 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 pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- Attainment in English is improving. The standards reached in 2010 were well above the national average. The percentage of pupils who reached the higher Level 5 at the end of Year 6 in 2010 was the highest for several years.
- From above-average starting points, pupils make good progress over their seven years at school. All pupil groups achieve well, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Standards were above average in the lessons observed and progress was good. This supports the school's own monitoring data, which suggest that the current Year 6 pupils are on track to attain above-average standards, maintaining the upward trend of the past three years.

- Pupils are keen to learn and concentrate well. They are articulate and work well together in small groups and pairs when formulating ideas for their writing. Younger children are confident and independent learners.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Most of the lessons observed during the inspection were of good quality. Teachers' expectations are high and they motivate pupils well. Relationships in lessons are good. Pupils are attentive and enjoy English.
- Strengths of the lessons observed included: linking English to other curriculum subjects well to provide an interesting context for a writing task; good use of drama to provide pupils with first-hand experience of script writing; clear explanations to pupils; and practical activities to support children learning new sounds and letters.
- Teachers provide a good level of support for the pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Well-trained teaching assistants work effectively with individuals or small groups of pupils both within and outside the lesson. However, in most lessons all pupils did the same task, even though there was a wide range of ability. Although all pupils usually managed the task, this approach meant that the lesson did not challenge all pupils equally.
- Most pupils know their learning targets. However, not all pupils know how to use these to improve their work. Teachers' marking does not always link clearly enough to pupils' targets, though there is some good practice from which staff can learn.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is satisfactory.

- The curriculum in English is broad and balanced, in line with national requirements. A good range of enrichment activities, involving for example theatre companies, authors and writing workshops, supports English lessons well.
- The curriculum for reading is satisfactory. Good use is made of class novels to extend pupils' knowledge of authors. Pupils who have reached the end of the reading scheme talk knowledgeably about reading, read regularly at home and clearly enjoy books. However, less confident readers are not clear how to move from one level to the next and are less eager to talk about their reading experiences.
- In Year 6 and in the Early Years Foundation Stage, good use is made of cross-curricular links to provide pupils with interesting experiences and topics for their writing tasks. However, this is not consistent across the school. In some year groups there is an over-reliance on published worksheets and this limits opportunities in literacy for pupils to carry out research or to find their own methods of presenting information for readers.

- The recently introduced system of assessing pupils' progress is beginning to have an impact on raising levels of attainment in writing across the school. However, staff are not using the information from these assessments consistently to design a curriculum which is closely matched to pupils' learning needs.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are good.

- You and your deputy headteacher have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching English. You track pupils' attainment and progress closely. You identify underachievement at an early stage and provide appropriate support. You have successfully raised standards in Key Stage 2 and in the Early Years Foundation Stage over the past three years. However, reading and writing standards in Key Stage 1 have remained stubbornly below the national average. You recognise the reasons for this and are tackling them effectively.
- You and the senior leadership team evaluate the impact of teaching through work sampling and lesson observations. You use this information well to drive improvement to the English curriculum, but this process is slowed because not all staff are making the link between what they do daily in lessons and the overall outcomes achieved by pupils.
- Your plans for improving the English curriculum are of good quality. You have identified the need for work in lessons to match pupils' individual abilities more closely and for staff to use the information from pupil tracking data to monitor pupils' progress in English.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that teachers use all the assessment information available to them to match the work they set in lessons to pupils' individual abilities
- improving feedback to pupils about how to improve their reading and writing, by linking it more closely to their learning targets.

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

Gill Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector