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Mr D Murphy
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Murphy

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 8 December 2010 to look at work in English. I particularly appreciated the welcome that you gave my colleague, Ann Henderson HMI, during this inspection.

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 four part-lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is satisfactory.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- Attainment in English at the end of Key Stage 2 has been consistently above average in recent years, especially in reading, which is a strength. In writing, pupils achieve the expected level, but the school is aware that progress in writing throughout Key Stage 2 is not as good as it should be, and inspection evidence confirms that standards throughout Key Stage 2 are inconsistent. Standards in speaking and listening are outstanding throughout the Key Stage.
- In Key Stage 1, attainment in reading is consistently well above average and, in the most recent unvalidated national tests, it is slightly above average in writing. Progress through Key Stage 1 in both reading and

writing is good. In speaking and listening, pupils display skills well above that expected for their age.

- Although year groups vary, children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills in communications, language and literacy that are broadly in line with those expected for their age. They make good progress and most meet and some exceed, expected levels by the time they transfer to Key Stage 1. Although reading is a strength, fewer boys than girls achieve expected levels in writing.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well, relative to their starting points, because accurate assessment, appropriate interventions and careful monitoring ensure that they receive good support.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is satisfactory.

- Teaching observed during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to good and none was inadequate. The best teaching, which took place in bright and colourful classrooms with language-rich displays, was well planned to take account of the wide range of pupils' needs and abilities. Learning was enhanced by the good quality of teachers' questioning which accurately assessed pupils' understanding, extended their learning and valued their responses. Teaching assistants support learning well and the excellent use of strategies such as 'talk partners' enhances pupils' speaking and listening skills.
- Where less effective teaching was observed, opportunities were missed to extend pupils' learning and the pace of learning was slowed by pupils sitting for too long on the carpet or being given activities that were less challenging. Nevertheless, pupils say that they enjoy their English lessons, especially when reading or studying literature.
- Marking is satisfactory with some strengths, but the quality varies. The use of differentiated lesson aims in exercise books is well established throughout the school and this helps pupils to understand what they have achieved. There is emerging evidence of pupils assessing their own work, but this is not yet consistent enough. Teachers' comments usually identify how pupils can improve their work, although occasionally these are not easy enough for pupils to read or understand. Pupils' presentation and handwriting vary and marking does not always challenge this rigorously enough.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is satisfactory.

- The curriculum provides a satisfactory balance between all aspects of English, and there is a good focus on phonics and a systematic approach to reading which results in high levels of attainment. Although the new

leadership of the school has clear plans to improve the quality of writing, it has not yet had time to have sufficient impact on pupils' progress and the quality of their writing, especially in older year groups.

- The school has started to tackle the issue of providing more opportunities for purposeful writing, identified in its most recent whole-school inspection, and an increasing number of examples show the good use of writing in other subjects, such as mathematics. However, leaders are aware that the provision of opportunities for pupils to use their skills in extended and independent writing, especially in Key Stage 2, remains an area for improvement. Similarly, the use of information and communication technology to support writing is underdeveloped.
- The school provides good opportunities to enrich the English curriculum, for example through theatre visits and drama events, and there are encouraging plans in place to develop this further.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are satisfactory.

- Following an unsettled period, the current school leaders have formed a very clear and accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in English and have started to address the issues. Although it is too soon to judge the impact of potentially very effective strategies to raise standards, early indications are positive and there has been some progress towards meeting challenging targets in English across the school. The leadership recognises that although in the past there has been a good focus on reading and writing in Key Stage 1, the provision for, and quality of, pupils' writing in Key Stage 2 has not improved swiftly enough.
- Although monitoring the quality of provision in English is patchy, rigorous and effective assessment and tracking systems are used well to inform strategic planning and set targets. However, although suitable priorities, actions and timescales have been identified, there are currently no clear criteria by which the success of actions will be measured.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- Improve the quality of writing, especially in Key Stage 2, by ensuring that:
 - more opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their extended and independent writing
 - teachers' marking demonstrates a more consistent approach and higher expectations, especially with regard to pupils' handwriting and presentation
 - the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning in writing is more systematic
 - strategic plans identify clear, measureable and challenging success criteria which focus on outcomes, especially in writing.

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

Chris Nye
Her Majesty's Inspector