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Mr P Overton
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Overton

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 22 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 parts of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- Attainment in English has been broadly average by the end of Key Stage 2 over the last three years and below average by the end of Key Stage 1. A significantly lower than average proportion of pupils reach the highest possible levels in English.
- Progress as measured by the contextual value-added measures has been good over the last three years. Boys and girls made similar progress from Key Stage 1 to 2 while the progress of the small number of higher attaining pupils was satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities made similar progress to their peers.
- Standards in lessons seen were broadly average overall and above average in Year 6. Progress was good. The school's own detailed

monitoring and forecasts indicate that pupils are on course to reach levels above the national average in English by the end of Key Stage 2.

- Pupils enjoy their learning in English, especially writing and story-telling. Most respond well in lessons and lower attaining pupils are able to work independently on appropriately challenging tasks.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Teaching observed during the inspection was good overall. Teachers consistently share the success criteria for the lesson and recap previous learning. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to bring stories and poems to life and to publish pupils' written work on the computer. Teachers and additional adults are consistent in their approach to story telling which engages pupils' enthusiasm.
- In the best lessons, teachers' sense of fun and enjoyment of story-telling are infectious and spread to the pupils. Lessons move at a brisk pace and pupils have many opportunities through 'talking partners' to share their ideas. Different learning tasks are pitched precisely at each group's targeted level. Much of the lesson time is devoted to pupils' own ideas.
- All pupils have written literacy targets that are signed and dated when achieved. Effective approaches to assessment include the use of highlighter pens to record evidence of a target achieved or not achieved and the spiders' web on display in Year 5 classes indicating clearly to pupils how far they are on track to reach their targets.
- Higher attaining pupils do not always respond to the extension challenges they are set and marking does not regularly show them how they could improve further once they have reached their target.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- The school has rightly placed a high emphasis on English given pupils' low starting points when they join the school. The 'talk for writing' project, based on a story-telling approach is an innovative development which engages all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The curriculum's thematic approach enables pupils to apply their literacy skills to a range of other subjects, especially ICT, history and geography. Most of the school's pupils come from similar backgrounds and the school strives successfully through stories, poems and themes to promote their knowledge of cultural diversity.
- The curriculum is heavily weighted towards literacy activities including guided reading, handwriting and a literacy hour every day plus a daily phonics session for younger pupils and spelling for older ones. The additional time allocated makes a significant contribution to raising standards in reading and writing.

- Planning for additional English curriculum enrichment activities, such as the book group for higher attaining pupils, are at an early stage of development.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are good.

- Senior leaders and managers have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in English and have rightly made writing a key priority for the school. The school has invested heavily in the "Talk for writing" project to ensure staff are well trained.
- Leaders and managers monitor teaching closely and have correctly identified that although the teaching of guided reading is a strength, the quality of phonics teaching is not as consistently good.
- Leaders and managers use data to track all pupils, including those who are at risk of falling behind, so that additional literacy support can be provided. Targets set are based on the accurate use of data and in most instances forecasts are close to actual results.
- Monitoring has less impact on ensuring that all high attaining pupils are sufficiently challenged to reach the highest possible levels in English. Written feedback to teachers following monitoring of literacy lessons does not consistently give areas for development to all teachers.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing the proportion of pupils who achieve Levels 4 and 5 in English at the end of Key Stage 2 by:
 - checking that the more challenging activities set in lessons are completed by higher attaining pupils to enable them to achieve the highest possible levels in reading and writing
 - ensuring that written feedback to pupils who have met more challenging targets consistently gives them areas for further improvement in their 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

Mark Sims
Her Majesty's Inspector