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Mrs C Sergeant  
Deputy Headteacher  
Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Primary School  
Northumberland Terrace  
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Liverpool  
L5 3QF

Dear Mrs Sergeant

### **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 17 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; a curriculum learning walk and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

### **Achievement in English**

Achievement in English is good.

- Attainment in English over the past three years has been average. In 2010, pupils in Year 6 reached above-average standards in reading, but writing standards remained low. The large proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals attain above their peers nationally, but they are not attaining quite as well as other pupils at the school.
- Pupils make good progress from their below-average starting points. The school keeps close track of pupils' progress and identifies any pupils at risk of falling behind, intervening with appropriate additional support at an early stage. Consequently, all pupil groups are achieving well in English.
- Lessons and the work in pupils' exercise books demonstrate that pupils are working at below-average standards in writing. Handwriting, spelling and use of punctuation are particularly weak aspects of their work. Older pupils do not write frequently enough at length. This is limiting fluency in

their extended writing tasks, with too little time to practise the skills they need to enable them to reach average standards in writing.

- Pupils contribute well in lessons and are enthusiastic learners. They are confident when talking to visitors. A large proportion of children start the school with considerable barriers to literacy, such as a limited vocabulary and knowledge of Standard English, and this hinders their progress, particularly in writing.

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

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Teaching observed during lessons was generally good or better. Teachers engage the pupils' attention exceptionally well. Lessons are lively and interesting, with a good range of activities closely matched to pupils' different abilities.
- In lessons observed, teachers demonstrated effectively to children what it means to be a good listener by taking a genuine interest in, and responding effectively to, what children say. In one lesson, the teacher used a guessing game well to focus pupils' attention on each other's writing. In another lesson, there was excellent assessment and celebration of pupils' knowledge of diary writing.
- Most lessons have an excellent focus on speaking and listening, enabling pupils to extend their vocabulary and develop ideas for writing well. However, in some lessons observed, teachers did not identify clearly enough what pupils should learn by the end of the lesson. This slowed pupils' progress.
- Marking is of good quality overall. There are some excellent examples where teachers identify pupils' success against individual targets and give clear guidance for their next steps in learning. Where it is particularly strong, teachers pick up weaknesses in pupils' writing in subjects other than English. However, there are inconsistencies in the correction of spelling and punctuation across the school and some pupils are uncertain how to improve their writing.

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

The quality of the curriculum in English is outstanding.

- The school's focus on developing a curriculum that is meaningful and of interest to the pupils is having a highly positive impact on the pupils' enjoyment of English, including their writing. Providing experiences such as visits to Colomendy, using the Mersey Ferry and having a Pirate Week, gives pupils something of interest to talk and write about.
- The school is exceptionally well resourced. Your purpose-built media room enables pupils to make DVDs that showcase their English work. The pupils talk animatedly about how to make a film. Older pupils film activities done by younger children, edit them and add voiceovers confidently. This is enriching their experience in English particularly well.

- An effective reading curriculum is enabling pupils to make excellent progress in reading. This includes time for individual reading, group reading and class novels or story books which often become a stimulus for other work, such as art and media technology.
- The curriculum to develop children's understanding of linking sounds to letters (phonics) is supporting pupils' progress well. This is leading to gradually improving standards in English at the end of Key Stage 1.

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

Leadership and management in English are good.

- The senior leadership team works together determinedly to drive up pupils' attainment in English, with good success. The ongoing development of the curriculum is supporting this well.
- Staff are trained well to provide programmes designed to accelerate pupils' progress in reading and writing and they identify any specific additional learning needs which require more specialised support.
- The senior leadership team knows the strengths and weaknesses in English teaching. As a result, there is accurate self-evaluation.
- Subject leaders monitor and evaluate the curriculum in English well. Their analysis of why pupils' attainment in writing is low is accurate. However, their plans for improving writing focus too much on implementing new programmes and activities rather than on their own detailed analysis of what teachers and pupils need to do daily to improve attainment.

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

- raising pupils' attainment in writing by ensuring that:
  - pupils are provided with more frequent opportunities for extended writing
  - feedback to pupils identifies errors in spelling, handwriting and punctuation consistently
- improving the quality of planning in English by:
  - identifying in individual lesson plans exactly what pupils should learn by the end of the lesson
  - linking improvement plans in English more closely to the subject leader's analysis of teaching and evaluation of pupils' learning outcomes.

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**