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Mr J Wilkinson
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Wilkinson

Ofsted 2010–11 best practice study: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visits on 27 May and 5 October 2010 to look at work in English.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our publication about best practice in English. The publication will include case studies about individual providers. If your school is included as a case study, you will have an opportunity to comment prior to publication. Individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: meetings with the headteacher, subject leaders, teachers and groups of pupils; scrutiny of school documentation; and observation of seven part-lessons.

Features of good practice

- Clear school vision and ethos, established and secured over time, which is focused on identifying pupils' needs and developing an aspiration to learn.
- Dynamic but reflective subject leadership founded on excellent understanding of literacy and how children learn best.
- Very strong relationships in all classes which encourage pupils to learn and to have the confidence to contribute and try out ideas.
- Consistently high-quality teaching across all years, adapted to ensure consistent approaches which are effective in promoting learning. Teachers have strong subject knowledge which they use to maintain a relentless focus on the key learning objectives and to engage pupils' interest.
- Pacy and lively teaching which secures key skills and the understanding of objectives, and challenges pupils to apply these in different contexts.

Teachers make the most of a range of approaches, using pair and group work frequently, promoting drama and role-play activities, and using interactive white boards effectively.

- Teachers use open-ended questions very effectively, prolonging discussion and encouraging debate in pairs and groups. As a result, children are in almost constant dialogue from the Early Years Foundation Stage and build their confidence to participate orally while also practising and improving their speaking and listening skills. Teachers model writing with pupils to ensure that they understand the process of composition.
- Displays are attractive and closely linked to learning, identifying key objectives and using pupils' work to model successful writing.
- The curriculum and teachers' planning actively engage pupils' interests and maximises opportunities for pupils to use literacy skills within other subjects or themes, often writing for real purposes. A wide variety of approaches ensures that pupils have the opportunity to learn in a way that suits them best but also to practise other approaches.
- Strategies and initiatives are carefully considered, trialled and kept constantly under review. Staff are encouraged to adapt or discontinue them if they do not deliver results.
- There is detailed formative assessment and tracking of pupils' progress to ensure that they maintain improvement and any barriers to learning are removed. Teachers' marking is structured and identifies clearly the major targets for pupils to improve.
- There is a very inclusive approach designed to ensure that pupils have every chance to succeed, based on a language-rich and stimulating learning environment. Teaching assistants use their initiative to support learning and have high expectations of pupils. Boys are motivated by practical tasks and activities with real 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

Martin Cragg
Her Majesty's Inspector