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16 December 2010

Mr K Ford
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Dear Mr Ford

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 6 December 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 satisfactory.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is satisfactory.

- Attainment in English has generally been well below average by the end of Key Stage 2 over recent years although it was broadly average in 2009. Pupils eligible for free school meals did much better than their peers nationally and better in the school than pupils not eligible for free school meals through the additional support that they received. Standards have also been well below average at the end of Key Stage 1 but in the most recent assessments in 2010 they improved to below average in reading and writing.
- Progress as measured by the contextual value-added measures has been satisfactory over the last three years and there is a rising trend. Girls made better progress than boys from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 while

pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities made similar progress to their peers.

- Pupils enter the school with an extremely low level of attainment. Standards in lessons seen were below average in Key Stage 2 and broadly average at Key Stage 1. Progress was good
- Pupils, particularly higher attaining pupils, enjoy their learning in English, especially story-making and writing because of the opportunities they have to work independently and in groups. Their behaviour and responses in lessons are good.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Teaching observed during the inspection was good overall. Recent appointments and improvements in teaching have not had time to impact on overall achievement which remains satisfactory. Tracking and monitoring by leaders indicates that previous weaknesses in teaching had slowed the progress of older pupils. Consistently good teaching at Key Stage 1 and in the Margaret Coates Centre for pupils with a statement of special educational needs and/or disabilities is leading to better outcomes for these pupils.
- In the best lessons, pupils of all abilities and levels are encouraged to write independently and adults working with pupils know when to intervene and when to step back. Story-telling is brought to life by teachers engaging pupils with their enthusiasm and good use of voice and expression. Lesson activities draw on pupils' own ideas and suggestions.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is occasionally used well, for example to bring the sights and sounds of the Blitz to life as if the pupils were there in 1940's London, but too often the interactive whiteboards are an underused resource. Lower-attaining groups are not always encouraged to work independently.
- All pupils know their written English targets. Pupils are involved in assessing their own as well as their peers' written work. Teachers' written marking regularly gives comments for development to improve pupils' work, although at times the comments are repetitious and not always followed up by teachers or pupils.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is satisfactory.

- Developing pupils' early speaking and listening skills is a high priority for the school. A range of strategies has led to improving standards at Key Stage 1. The successful phonics programme has been extended into Years 3 and 4 to ensure that pupils who have missed out on early intervention can catch up. Guided reading and handwriting feature regularly on the timetable. Cross-curricular themes encourage pupils to develop their literacy skills.

- The new, well-stocked library is at the heart of the school. The school has invested in a specialist librarian and a literacy-focused activity takes place every lunchtime. Pupils help to run the library. Older pupils act as 'reading buddies' for younger pupils at lunchtime and the school has introduced several additional reading initiatives.
- Initiatives are targeted at particular individuals or groups such as pupils receiving free school meals and detailed tracking shows the successful outcomes of these initiatives at Key Stage 1. Older pupils have missed out as many interventions were not in place when they were younger. The curriculum is satisfactory overall because it has not had sufficient impact on achievement at Key Stage 2. ICT is an under-used resource in the school and not all lower-attaining pupils are encouraged to work independently.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are good.

- You and other senior leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in English and have recognised the need to build on the successful strategies put in place at Key Stage 1. Through effective monitoring, teaching has improved and is now mostly good, with previously identified weaknesses in teaching addressed. The governing body is strongly supportive of the literacy drive and there is a designated literacy governor.
- The school has invested in programmes to improve English in the school. The Margaret Coates Centre represents the school's strong commitment to inclusion and meeting the literacy needs of pupils with learning difficulties by encouraging independent writing and the use of ICT.
- Training of all staff and volunteers in literacy ensures that English is taught more consistently by all adults who work with pupils. Tracking of individual pupils' progress through the accurate use of data ensures that interventions are targeted at those with the greatest need. Cultural diversity and the use of pupils' other languages are strengths of the school and many of the pupil arrivals who are new to English have done well. Minority ethnic pupils are well represented in higher attaining groups.
- You recognise that standards are not yet consistently high enough at Key Stage 2 in English and that ICT is underused within English. The school is less well-equipped to meet the needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language and who are not already literate in their first language.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- Raise standards in English for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 by:
 - ensuring that lower and middle attaining pupils are given greater opportunities to write independently

- using ICT more effectively to support pupils' literacy development
- ensuring that written feedback to pupils is followed up and that suggestions for development are acted upon by pupils.

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