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30 September 2010

Miss H O'Brien
Headteacher
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Dear Miss O'Brien

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 with Mark Sims HMI on 20 September 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 five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good, with some outstanding features.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- Attainment has improved. For the past three years, pupils have performed significantly above average in national assessments of both reading and writing.
- They make good progress from broadly average starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is true for all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Pupils' attitudes to English are positive and they are keen to improve their work. Most are good at concentrating on assignments by themselves. They say they enjoy lessons because teachers make them interesting and helpful.
- Pupils read and write effectively, helped by a particularly secure knowledge of spelling and sentence construction. They present their

writing very well. However, their strong technical skills in English are not quite matched by their independence in applying them.

- Pupils enjoy the stories that they share in class and most enjoy reading their own choice of texts independently. They express their ideas clearly in discussions, although most discussion observed in the classroom was directed by and through the teacher.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding, reflecting the school's own evaluations.
- Strengths include consistently high expectations, good use of assessment to plan for pupils' different talents and needs, and effective management of lessons. Relationships are warm and positive, and pupils cooperate well with adults. Feedback is specific and explains the next steps that pupils need to take. Pupils are given time to respond to marking.
- In the best lessons observed, teachers used their good resources to stimulate pupils' thinking and to involve all in challenging activities. Their flexible teamwork with teaching assistants ensured that every pupil engaged with learning and showed what he or she could do independently.
- The quality of learning was occasionally less good because teachers' explanations were not fully clear or because they missed opportunities to help pupils to explore ideas themselves. Planning occasionally limited progress by focusing on tasks rather than learning.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- Very good attention to literacy across the age range has contributed significantly to raising standards. Teachers encourage pupils to use new skills in other areas of the curriculum, which helps pupils to see their relevance.
- The curriculum is also broad. Teachers reflect local and global issues and the interests of pupils in English work. Pupils enjoy the range of fiction and non-fiction texts that is shared in lessons.
- A good range of special events and visitors enriches pupils' experiences. Extra activities, such as a drama club, have been combined with other interventions to help vulnerable pupils engage better with the subject.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are good.

- Senior leaders, with support from the local authority, have established a clear sense of direction for English and a common understanding of effective teaching and assessment among staff. This has improved consistency in the quality of teaching and considerably raised pupils' attainment and engagement.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and well informed by assessments and other information. Staff check that all groups of pupils are doing well, and look carefully at a range of evidence, including pupils' views, when evaluating learning.
- A sustained, well-focused programme of professional development has improved the consistency of teaching. Teachers receive specific and challenging individual feedback. However, not all staff have been able to observe the very best practice within or beyond the school, and there is scope to share successful approaches more widely.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving pupils' opportunities to use their skills independently, including in speaking and listening
- sharing best practice so that more teaching is good or outstanding.

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

Susan Bowles
Her Majesty's Inspector