

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



19 January 2011

Mr A Bernard
Headteacher
Noadswood High School
North Road
Dibden Purlieu
Southampton
Hampshire SO45 4ZF

Dear Mr Bernard

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 10 and 11 November 2010 to look at work in English. I greatly appreciated the cheerful efficiency with which my visit was managed.

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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- Students' prior attainment on entry is broadly average, with a smaller than average proportion of higher attainers. Provisional results for 2010 show 74% gaining A* to C in English Language – a marked increase on 2009. All groups make good progress, including those with special educational needs and /or disabilities. Two thirds of the cohort were entered for English Literature, 78% gaining A* to C. Girls made better progress than boys in English but the gap is now closing in response to changes in the curriculum and in teaching approaches.
- Students are keen to do well and work hard to achieve their personal targets, routinely measuring their current attainment against National Curriculum and examination boards' grade descriptors. They respond well

to opportunities to work collaboratively. Homework is considered worthwhile, with the advantage that, as a Year 7 student pointed out to general agreement, 'Your mum and dad can learn as well!'

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Much of the teaching observed was good or outstanding. Among its conspicuous strengths were infectiously enthusiastic subject knowledge, well-structured planning, constructive use of modern technology, good questioning skills and a positive rapport with students. They are encouraged to explore interpretations and to debate, negotiate and explain, all of which they clearly enjoy.
- In less effective lessons, the pace and time allotted to specific activities were not always well managed. Occasionally, students were required to move on before making substantial headway with a task, which they found frustrating. On a few occasions, the overall pace was not sufficiently brisk to keep students engaged, especially some boys. The best plans include extension tasks for the most able but are less effective in incorporating strategies for re-engaging students whose concentration and willingness to cooperate have flagged. Although there are variations in approach across the ability sets, lesson planning does not routinely take into account the range of ability and learning styles represented in each class.
- Extensive use is made of assessment priorities, both in lesson planning and in the marking of work. This helps teachers and students to identify strengths and areas for improvement, especially in the development of skills. Marking of pieces selected for assessment is thorough and generally combines encouragement with guidance on how to improve.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- The curriculum is well suited to students' interests and aspirations. It is evolving constructively in response to changing GCSE specifications and to opportunities for a more expansive approach to Year 9 following the ending of Key Stage 3 tests. Students are encouraged to read whole novels and plays, to engage with a range of poetry and to respond thoughtfully to powerful use of spoken and written language.
- Schemes of work are detailed and linked carefully to National Curriculum requirements and examination board specifications. Students in Key Stage 3, including boys, find many of the units of study engaging, particularly those involving film and animation.
- The curriculum is complemented by theatre visits and workshops, by regular activities such as film club and play productions, and by booster classes and revision sessions. Opportunities for students to make a positive contribution beyond the school are being developed, with 'literacy leaders' being trained to work with primary school children.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are good.

- The head of department provides steady support and structure for a diverse, committed and very competent group of teachers. Their willingness to learn from their own and each other's experience drives improvement. The head of department monitors teaching and assessment systematically and this sets priorities for effective professional development.
- The department's handbook and action plan are founded on careful assessment of strengths and areas for development. Realistic self-evaluation is shaping strategies to modernise the curriculum and to strengthen achievement. Targets are challenging but manageable. Students' evident enjoyment of the subject and their improving attainment and progress indicate that capacity for further improvement is good.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that planning and teaching more consistently reflect the range of ability and learning styles within classes
- reviewing teaching strategies to ensure that students' interest is maintained throughout the lesson.

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

Patricia Metham
Her Majesty's Inspector