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Mr P Tapp  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Tapp

### **Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: English**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 8 and 9 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of seven lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

### **Achievement in English**

Achievement in English is good.

- Attainment in English is above average. Attainment rose significantly in 2009 and this trend was sustained with a further increase in the unvalidated results for 2010. Attainment in English Literature, which is taken by most students, has been in line with the results in English Language but dipped in 2010. During 2010, 80% of students gained at least a grade C in English Language but only one student gained an A\* grade in either English or English Literature.
- Attainment on entry to the school is a little above average in English. Above-average GCSE results represent good progress by both boys and girls. However, the department did not meet its target for the number of students gaining an A\* grade.

- In the sixth form achievement is satisfactory. A-level and AS-level results in English Language and Literature are broadly average and students make satisfactory progress.

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

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Teaching provides students with strong direction and support for developing their skills in reading and writing. Teachers provide expert commentary and questions which extend understanding. On occasion, teachers act in role which is highly effective in stimulating learning and enjoyment. Classroom displays are used well to reinforce reading and writing techniques.
- Resources, including the interactive whiteboard and highlighter pens, are used well to enable students to understand and analyse texts. In most classrooms, students are keen to work and there is a productive working atmosphere. Independent learning assignments give students good opportunities to do extended work at home.
- On occasion, the timing and structure of tasks is not tight enough to maximise the active participation by students. Occasionally, there is too much direction and insufficient opportunity for students to develop their own responses. Although often done well, teachers do not always draw out key points about what has been achieved in one task to show how the next task will build on their learning.
- Assessment and marking provide students with good guidance on what they are doing well and on how to improve. In Year 9, the recently introduced system for assessing pieces of work results in constructive feedback from teachers and self-reflective comments by students.
- In the sixth form, the teaching observed was sometimes outstanding, being both imaginative and highly stimulating intellectually. Occasionally, activities lacked variety. The department has accurately identified the need to focus tasks on the specific skills needed to succeed in the different examination papers. In addition, steps have been taken to stretch the more able by increasing the level of challenge and independence.

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

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- At Key Stage 4, the quality of the English curriculum is good. The new Key Stage 4 scheme of work provides a clear and detailed framework for the new GCSE requirements, including the controlled conditions assessment. At Key Stage 3, the well-presented scheme of work provides a strong framework and good guidance for each module of study.
- At both key stages the lesson planning structure provides a good focus on learning and assessment. Students have good opportunities to study poetry, drama and media. In Year 9, wider reading is promoted well through the popular library lesson and is supported in tutor groups. Some

aspects of assessment are yet to be planned into the Year 9 programme of study.

- Extra-curricular activities, such as visits to the theatre and visits by writers, provide good enrichment to the curriculum in the main school and the sixth form. Students in Year 11 and the sixth form extend their range of reading through the recently formed book club and they take the leadership in producing and writing the school magazine.

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

Leadership and management in English are good.

- The newly appointed subject leaders and the much-changed English team have started well. Roles and responsibilities have been delegated well within the department and members of the department have already shown initiative in developing aspects of provision. There is a good sense of common purpose and a shared commitment to raising expectations and achievement.
- The new department development plan accurately identifies key areas for development. Evaluation of performance data is not sharp enough. Target measures of increased impact are described well but are not rigorously quantified and dated. Actions to implement the plan have been taken promptly and the department is well organised. Analysis of weaknesses in teaching and assessment in the sixth form is supported by good analysis of data and a specific action plan for improvement which has started to be implemented effectively.
- The leadership and planning of the curriculum and assessment have provided a clear direction for the department and a consistent framework for students.

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

- Raise attainment and progress by:
  - increasing the proportion of students that gain an A\* grade at GCSE
  - improving the progress made by students in the sixth form.

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

**Bernard Campbell**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**