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Miss A Whitehead  
Headteacher  
The Willows Primary School  
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Dear Miss Whitehead

### **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 4 October 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 and pupils' work; observation of five lessons and a visit to the Reception.

The overall effectiveness of English is outstanding.

### **Achievement in English**

Achievement in English is good.

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with levels of development below average. They make outstanding progress and a higher proportion than average achieves the expected early learning goals for communication, language and literacy.
- Attainment at age 11 has improved year on year and was average in the last two years. In 2010, there was a dip, due at least partly to the higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and pupils joining the school in Year 6.
- Boys' lower achievement in writing is a weakness that the school is tackling thoughtfully and energetically. Pupils eligible for free school meals gain better than average results in English.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 1. Progress from Key Stage 1 to 2 was outstanding in 2008 and average in 2009. Unvalidated results

for 2010 indicate that progress was good. School data indicate that progress is slower in the middle years.

- Pupils are well-motivated to speak, read and write in response to the good-quality visual resources and well-constructed opportunities to take on roles. There are some weaknesses in boys' writing and they are less keen on extended writing.

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

The quality of teaching in English is good

- Planning provides a clear structure and sequence of learning. The use of visual and practical resources is stimulating. Teachers provide clear explanations. In the best lessons, the teacher adapts the text creatively to engage pupils' interests. They take on the role of a character so that pupils express themselves spontaneously and are adventurous in their use of language.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the high quality of structured play and the integration of reading and writing into indoor and outdoor activities, promote language development well.
- Guided work for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is planned well and matches their needs. Adapted work stretches the more able. Marking of written work is systematic and specific comments provide praise and advice on how to improve. The analysis of progress and attainment at Key Stage 1 has not been as sharply focused as at other key stages.

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

The quality of the curriculum in English is outstanding.

- The curriculum is innovative and creative. Topics provide a meaningful context for language work. 'Super learning weeks' have boy-friendly themes, such as monsters, which are popular and stimulate pupils' language development. Phonics and basic literacy are systematically planned. Structured play and the use of drama successfully promote self-expression and language development. The developing work to understand the news and other online material is valued by pupils.
- Opportunities to see plays, meet writers and go on visits are regular. They are integrated into the curriculum and provide exciting experiences and good reasons to write.
- The school has a well-planned programme of catch-up work for literacy. Well-qualified teaching assistants provide regular and structured programmes of work for targeted pupils.

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

Leadership and management in English are outstanding.

- Leaders provide a strong vision for basic literacy and the creative and purposeful uses of language. English is led very well by an excellent subject leader who models high-quality teaching and articulates a convincing philosophy of learning and language development. Strong direction is provided through the high quality of curriculum planning and creativity is encouraged.
- Systems for monitoring lessons and pupils' work and for evaluating pupils' progress lead to effective action. Any identified staff development issues are tackled promptly. The school leads a local network on boys' writing and provides training to other schools on how to improve the quality of teaching.
- The new leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been highly effective in improving outcomes in communication, language and literacy. Senior leadership has been effective in maintaining good progress and achievement in the main school.

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

- raising attainment so that it is consistently at or above the national average by:
  - accelerating the progress of pupils in the middle years of primary school and ensuring that boys make consistently good progress, especially in writing.
  - refining the use of data in Key Stage 1 to identify pupils who could make faster progress.

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**