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Mr G Hadlow
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Hadlow

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 8 February 2011 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 four lessons.

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

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is satisfactory.

- Attainment at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 is well below the national average. The pattern of results has been broadly stable over recent years. Attainment in writing was better than reading in the externally moderated teacher assessments in 2010, in contrast with the national trend.
- Children's communication and literacy skills are very low in comparison with national expectations on entry to the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In addition, a very large number of pupils join the school at other times from overseas and many of these have little or no knowledge of English when they arrive. Over half the pupils in Year 6 last year joined the school after the beginning of Year 3.
- Overall, pupils make good progress. The figures show that the proportion of pupils who make two levels of progress across Key Stage 2 has risen in

the past two years and was broadly average in 2010. The school's analysis shows that those pupils who joined the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage made better than average progress in 2010. The data also show that attainment has risen at the end of Key Stage 2 for those pupils who join the school between the ages of four and seven.

- The progress of boys has improved over the past two years. No significant differences exist in the progress made by the different minority ethnic groups in the school although Pakistani pupils tend to attain less highly than the other groups.
- Pupils behave very well and are keen to learn. They are very supportive of each other. For example, pupils go out of their way to help new arrivals, especially where they have difficulties understanding English. Older pupils speak English confidently and well; for many of these pupils, this represents outstanding progress given their starting points.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Pupils enjoy English, especially when teachers engage their interest through drama and role-play activities or give them some choice over topics and how to respond.
- Strengths in the lessons observed included good relationships with pupils and effective collaboration between teachers and classroom assistants. Lessons were lively and well planned. There was a good focus on activities that provided pupils with opportunities for speaking and listening. Teachers helped pupils make good progress through effective modelling of reading and speaking.
- The lessons observed were consistent in their approach to planning with an initial learning objective posed as a question for pupils, supported by several 'steps to success'. This worked well although the 'steps to success' were sometimes over-complicated and looked towards longer-term learning gains rather than immediate needs within the lesson. Teaching focused well on the mechanics of writing but pupils sometimes needed more help with considering the content of their writing.
- Assessment is good. Pupils have a clear understanding of the areas for improvement in English. This reflects some very good practice in the school through detailed marking that provides clear feedback and identifies areas for improvement. However, some marking is not as helpful in enabling pupils to understand their next steps in English and there is variability in the ways that teachers correct and follow up spelling mistakes.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- The English programme is broad, balanced and in line with recent national guidance. There is a particular emphasis on developing pupils' speaking

and listening skills since so many pupils do not speak English at home. The school has clear plans to construct a more creative, cross-curricular programme that will meet the particular needs of their pupils even better.

- Standards in writing have improved over the past two years. This reflects recent developments. Pupils are given a good range of opportunities for extended writing and there is effective emphasis for older pupils on encouraging them to review and redraft their work.
- Pupils enjoy reading. Home reading is monitored systematically and the school has improved reading resources and re-opened the library. A range of strategies, including guided reading, is used to develop reading skills although some pupils do not read widely at home and lack understanding of the books they read.
- A very good range of enrichment activities supports work in English. Much of this is targeted at particular groups of pupils. For example, a successful cluster web-project was aimed at underachieving boys last year. Other examples include drama performances, the Junior Apprentice scheme, reading projects and Booster classes. There is also a good range of drama and writer visits.
- The school operates a vast range of catch-up courses for pupils and parents. Over 60 pupils are currently involved in one-to-one literacy sessions and extra help is provided for reading, phonics and communication across all classes. This is a well-managed programme that is monitored carefully by the school.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are good.

- The capacity for further improvement in English is good. Pupils' progress has improved over the past two years and staffing has been stabilised. The progress of pupils is monitored regularly and well; this enables the school to introduce the most suitable intervention programmes for individual pupils. New arrivals are well supported through the school's induction programme.
- Self-evaluation in English is accurate. The school knows what it does well and acknowledges the need to raise standards at the end of Year 6. Strategies are in place to improve attainment although action plans need more specificity over what needs to be done to enhance further the quality of teaching.
- Monitoring and evaluation are thorough. Provision is reviewed through evidence about classroom teaching, monitoring teachers' plans and marking, and occasional feedback from pupils and parents. Helpful suggestions are passed on to individual teachers although the lesson observation format requires more attention to pupils' learning and progress within the lesson. The subject leader has a clear plan for monitoring the progress of specific pupils across a number of classes.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising standards in English at the end of Key Stage 2 by:
 - developing the school's strategies for promoting pupils' enjoyment of reading and their understanding of the texts that they read
 - extending the teaching of writing by giving pupils more help with ideas and content and ensuring consistency in the quality of marking, feedback and approaches to spelling.

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

Philip Jarrett
Her Majesty's Inspector