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Mrs J Dickenson  
Headteacher  
Bridgemere CofE Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Dickenson

### **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 2 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.

### **Achievement in English**

Achievement in English is satisfactory.

- This is a very small school and cohorts vary in size from 7 to 15. This means that standards in English vary widely according to the percentage of pupils in each year group identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Overall, pupils start the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities in line with those expected for their age. By the time they leave Year 6, most pupils reach the levels expected nationally in English for 11-year-olds. However, the percentage of pupils reaching the higher levels in writing is below that found nationally.
- Progress, as measured by contextual value-added measures, is satisfactory. In 2010, pupils in Year 6 made good progress in reading and reached significantly higher standards than previously. However, progress

in writing is comparatively slow. The progress of pupils currently in the school fluctuates between year groups but overall is satisfactory.

- Pupils' progress was mainly satisfactory or better in lessons observed, except in one lesson where it was inadequate. This supports the school's own monitoring, which suggests that pupils in Year 6 will reach their challenging targets in 2011.
- Pupils are keen to learn and concentrate well. Many are articulate and express their ideas clearly. They cooperate well in groups and are confident to challenge each others' ideas, collaborating well to finish the task.

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

The quality of teaching in English is satisfactory.

- Recent high staff turnover has had an impact on consistency in the quality of teaching. The large majority of the lessons observed were of satisfactory quality or better. Generally, teaching engaged the pupils' interests well. Lessons had a good range of activities including group and individual work. Relationships were positive. Teachers made their expectations clear and paced the lessons well.
- Strengths of the lessons observed included a good focus on modelled writing, where the teacher used the interactive whiteboard effectively to gather the pupils' sentences to write a description of a setting for a story. This enabled the pupils to see how to link ideas together successfully to extend their writing. In another Key Stage 2 lesson, the teacher was assessing the pupils' knowledge of how to structure a script by requiring them to organise dialogue, characters and stage directions in a play based on a well-known nursery rhyme. This was a challenging activity which developed pupils' understanding of inference well.
- Where teaching was weaker, this related to all pupils being set the same task, regardless of ability. For example, in one lesson, all pupils were studying the /ai/ grapheme, despite pupils being at very different ability levels. Some pupils struggled to understand, whereas others found it far too easy.
- Despite recent developments in assessment, pupils remain uncertain about how to improve their work in English. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, but do not always pick up spelling mistakes and poor punctuation consistently enough. In addition, pupils do not respond to teachers' marking routinely, so although some staff mark work very conscientiously, it has insufficient impact on improving pupils' writing.

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

The quality of the curriculum in English is satisfactory.

- A good range of enrichment activities supports the English curriculum well. This includes visits and visitors to school, drama productions, visiting

theatre groups and the local library bus. In addition, parents and helpers in the community hear pupils read regularly.

- Writing is the focus for school improvement. The introduction of the '21<sup>st</sup> day' writing book, where the whole school tackles a writing task in the same genre, is increasing the focus on writing and accelerating pupils' progress. Teachers are starting to use this well for developing assessment. However, curriculum planning does not focus sharply enough on the skills pupils need to learn to improve their writing. In addition, older pupils do not have enough opportunities to write at length.
- The school has recently extended the range of reading books for pupils and this is supporting the improvement in reading standards. Pupils have reading logs and staff ensure that pupils read from a good range of genre. Targeted individual reading support, using an appropriate range of programmes, is effective. However, the school does not make effective enough use of pupil attainment information in teaching phonics.

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

Leadership and management in English are satisfactory.

- You have identified the strengths and weaknesses in English well. Recent actions taken as a whole school in marking and assessing pupils' writing are leading to a more consistent approach and better understanding of how to improve the teaching of writing, but this is at an early stage of development.
- Because of the turnover in staff, the school has found it very difficult to move forward quickly to improve pupils' progress in English. In addition, the subject leader is not involved in monitoring teaching and learning. Therefore, she is not able to pinpoint exactly how to help staff to improve their work. Staff monitor pupils' progress against their targets regularly and this is leading to earlier identification of weaknesses and well-targeted intervention programmes.
- Partnership work between local small schools is leading to the sharing of good practice in English. This is particularly valuable for the newly qualified teachers, who are benefiting from seeing some outstanding teaching and learning in other schools.
- Senior leaders evaluate the impact of teaching through work sampling. However, this does not always provide enough detailed feedback to staff on a regular basis about strengths and weaknesses in English.

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

- raising standards in English, particularly in writing, by:
  - improving feedback to pupils, including consistently identifying common spelling and grammatical errors in their writing
  - providing time for pupils to respond to teachers' marking

- using assessment information to provide sufficiently challenging tasks for pupils
- improving the leadership and management of English by increasing opportunities to monitor the quality of teaching and learning across the school to secure greater consistency in practice.

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

**Gill Jones**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**