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Mr A Hinchliffe  
Headteacher  
Corfe Hills School  
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Dear Mr Hinchliffe

### **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 14 and 15 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of nine lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is outstanding.

### **Achievement in English**

Achievement in English is good.

- Attainment is above average. In 2010, the proportion of students gaining A\* to C GCSE grades in English was above the national average, with students' average points scores being significantly higher. Over a fifth of students gained A\* or A in English Language and English Literature.
- In 2010, the proportion of students achieving Level 5 and Level 6 in school tests at the end of Year 9 improved following more extensive collaboration with feeder schools over curriculum and assessment issues.
- Students make good progress. They are keen to do well, whatever their ability, and respond with energy and imagination when given opportunities to explore ideas through role play, debate and use of varied resources.

Boys as well as girls are enthusiastic readers, which has a very positive impact on their range of expression and thinking.

- All 40 candidates for A-level English Language in 2010 achieved a pass grade, with nearly half gaining A or B grades. Of the 34 taking English Literature, all passed and one third achieved A or B. Given the range of prior attainment in the sixth form, this represents good achievement.

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

The quality of teaching in English is outstanding.

- Students identify excellent teaching as the driving force in their learning. Shared strengths include: well-informed enthusiasm; planning that builds sensibly on students' current knowledge; highly productive questioning skills; confident use of technology; and the effective deployment of learning support assistants.
- Students' diverse learning styles, even within ability-based teaching sets, are not always fully catered for. On occasion, pace and timing do not challenge the most able sufficiently.
- The strong take-up of English Language and English Literature in the sixth form stems from confidence and enjoyment fostered in earlier years. Students respond extremely well to the increased pace and expectation: 'You can't miss a lesson!' They enjoy their greater independence and personal responsibility while also valuing teachers' close monitoring of their progress.

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

The quality of the curriculum in English is outstanding.

- Transition from local middle schools is especially well managed through the 'Pyramid' group. This group meets regularly to develop cross-phase study units, to plan shared activities such as writers' workshops, and to ensure consistency in assessment. Year 9 students speak with engaging enthusiasm about the literature they explore and appreciate the skills they develop in readiness for GCSE.
- Staff and students have responded extremely positively to new GCSE specifications. Controlled assessment of coursework is proving especially helpful for boys.
- There is a similarly positive response to recent changes in AS and A-level specifications. Literature students particularly enjoy the exploration of themes across periods and genres, while Language students relish their enquiry into social and linguistic elements.
- The curriculum is well extended through an impressive range of activities and events. Work with a published poet has been particularly effective in developing students' creative writing. Cross-curricular events and exploration of local resources - this is Thomas Hardy country - very successfully enhance core learning.

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

Leadership and management in English are outstanding.

- With strong support from you and other senior leaders, the head of faculty shows considerable skill in managing a large department of well-qualified and enterprising teachers. They share a clear and ambitious vision for English. Among their conspicuous strengths are: collaborative planning; sharing of good practice; openness to new ideas and methods; well-honed professional skills; and peer mentoring underpinned by the head of faculty's regular monitoring of teaching and learning.

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

- ensuring that planning and teaching consistently match the full range of students' learning styles and abilities within teaching groups.

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**