

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Mr B Jones  
Headteacher  
Mount Tamar School  
Row Lane  
Higher St Budeaux  
Plymouth  
PL5 2EF

Dear Mr Jones

### **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 and 9 March 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 five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

### **Achievement in English**

Achievement in English is good.

- Pupils enter the school with skills well below those expected for their age. They make good progress in their learning overall but attainment remains low.
- Pupils make good progress in Key Stages 1, 2 and 4 but slower progress at Key Stage 3, partly because of an influx of pupils at this time. Those pupils who have been at the school longer generally make better progress. Pupils educated at the Hamoaze Centre, whose circumstances make them particularly vulnerable and who often have a history of severe disruption to their education, make good progress.
- Attainment and progress are best in speaking and listening. Nevertheless, pupils speak enthusiastically about their reading, with those in Key Stage 2 talking knowledgeably about a wide range of texts and Key Stage 4 pupils

showing enthusiasm for studying Shakespeare. Pupils enjoy writing but progress in this area is not as strong.

- In lessons, pupils behave well, particularly when teaching engages their interest.

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

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Teachers and teaching assistants know the pupils well and give them good support tailored to their individual needs. Lessons are structured carefully so that pupils understand clearly the purpose of the activities.
- In the best practice observed, lessons were planned so that they were linked to previous learning and were part of a coherent scheme of work. For example, in a Key Stage 2 lesson in which pupils were absorbed in writing their own creation stories, they had previously read creation myths from a range of cultures and had drawn and illustrated their own worlds before considering the best vocabulary for describing them.
- Teachers use questioning skilfully to help pupils to increase their vocabulary orally and in their writing. They sometimes miss opportunities to extend this by challenging pupils to use vocabulary in more complex sentences and in paragraphs. Although pupils are given the support they need to reach basic levels and make good progress, expectations are not always sufficiently high to enable them to build on this and work independently.
- Assessment in lessons is good but marking does not always point out precisely what has been achieved or the next steps pupils should take to improve their work.

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

The quality of the curriculum in English is satisfactory.

- The curriculum in each key stage is balanced and meets requirements. Good links to previous learning and other subjects provide opportunities to develop skills in English well. For example, pupils observed in Key Stage 1 made good progress in understanding the structure of the language of instructions while making pancakes. Pupils at Key Stage 4 in the Hamoaze Centre develop their literacy skills well while studying history.
- Links between the different key stages are underdeveloped so that opportunities to create a coherent experience across the school and to share best practice are not sufficiently taken up.
- Although there are many opportunities for enrichment through trips and visits, these are rarely specifically for English and those of a more general nature are not sufficiently used to provide a basis for discussion, research and writing in English.

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

Leadership and management in English are good.

- Leaders and managers in the different sections of the school ensure that the pupils make good progress, whether in the satellite class for Key Stage 1 pupils, the primary and secondary schools on the Mount Tamar site, or in the Hamoaze Centre in the Devonport area of the city. Consequently, the overall impact of leaders and managers is good.
- At present, there is no coherent plan for English across the school, including monitoring and evaluating provision. Consequently, meetings across the phases lack a clear focus and strengths in particular areas are not shared to good effect across the school.

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

- raising levels of attainment by challenging pupils to work independently and have more confidence in their ability to write more complex sentences in paragraphs in a range of styles
- establishing a coherent plan for improvement across the school with a clear cycle of monitoring and evaluation to provide the basis for sharing good practice across all key stages.

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

**Andrew Harrett**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**