

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Miss T Ali
Headteacher
Arnett Hills Junior Mixed and Infant School
Berry Lane
Rickmansworth
Hertfordshire
WD3 4BT

Dear Miss Ali

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 22 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 three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- Attainment in English is above average by the end of Key Stage 2. In recent years, standards have been well above average but fell to above average in 2008 and 2009. There was a large dip in the most recent tests when the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and or/disabilities was much higher than in previous years. Standards were broadly average in 2010.
- Pupils enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with a low level of skills in communication, language and literacy but by the time they start Year 1 their skills are above average for their age. Progress from Key Stage 1 to 2, as measured by the contextual value-added measures, has been good over the last three years but fell in 2010 because lower attaining pupils made satisfactory progress. All other sizeable groups of pupils made good progress.

- Standards in the lessons seen were well above average and progress was good. The school's data suggest that most Year 6 pupils are on course to reach standards well above the national average by the end of Key Stage 2, having achieved above average standards by the end of Key Stage 1. A small proportion of pupils with special educational needs and or/disabilities are not making sufficient progress, however.
- Pupils enjoy their learning in English, particularly reading, the variety of writing activities, and the opportunity to improve their work through self-assessment. They respond well to role plays and enjoy using a range of media including video and sound recordings. At times, they feel they do not have enough time to finish their writing.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- The teaching observed was good overall. Lessons are planned well to engage the interests of different groups of pupils including those with special educational needs and or/disabilities. Higher-attaining pupils do especially well as they thrive on the opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. Lower-attaining pupils do not have as much opportunity to work independently. Self-assessment is well embedded and pupils of all levels are highly skilled in evaluating their work, always seeking to make further improvements.
- Teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively to bring learning to life. Their penetrating questions give pupils maximum opportunity to speak in lessons and there are further contexts in extended group and pair work for pupils to practise using formal English for a range of purposes.
- Praise in feedback is used well by teachers to encourage pupils' writing but pupils also respond well to constructive criticism and comments that help them to improve further. Older pupils are very secure about the level they are working at in English.
- Teaching assistants engage well with pupils and their role is clearly identified by teachers in their planning.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- Pupils appreciate the large amount of curriculum time devoted to literacy and cross-curricular themes with a literacy focus. They are enormously proud of their new library which has further enhanced their love of reading. ICT plays a significant part in supporting literacy and the dedicated suite of computers in the library is used well. Pupils have had many opportunities to use a range of media including filming 'Newsround' interviews, recording voice-overs for advertisements and producing radio broadcasts.

- Support for higher attaining pupils tends to be provided by senior staff including you and the literacy coordinator and this has led to them making rapid progress. Lower attaining pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to work independently.
- A wide range of extra-curricular activities, including the drama club and school council, has enhanced pupils' speaking and listening skills, and a comic club and computer club have encouraged pupils to develop their writing.
- Transition at all stages is a strength of the school. Summer-born pupils do exceptionally well in reading and writing at the end of Key Stage 1 because, after a phased start in the first few weeks, they attend school full time from autumn half term. Teachers plan jointly across year groups and this smoothes the transition of pupils from one phase to another. Links with secondary schools are well established.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are good.

- The school is in the process of changing arrangements for leadership of English. You and the previous, experienced subject leader know strengths and weaknesses well. You know that reading is a strength in the school and that while most groups of pupils do well, lower attaining pupils did not do as well in the most recent tests at Key Stage 2.
- You have acted strategically in placing strong English teaching at the start of Key Stage 2 and in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Leaders and managers of English have had an impact in establishing self-assessment and marking as a consistent strength across the school.
- Senior leaders have used data accurately to monitor the progress of individuals and groups of pupils but this is not as well established with class teachers or with the new subject leader who is new in post. You know where the strengths in teaching lie and have been effective in providing support for teachers when required.
- You have identified that lower attaining pupils did not do as well as other groups in the most recent tests and have carefully evaluated which interventions were successful and which were less so. For this year additional support has been provided earlier and, consequently, all groups of pupils in Year 6 are on course to do well.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising the achievement of lower-attaining pupils by ensuring that they receive the same high-quality support offered to high attaining pupils and that they are able to take responsibility for their learning
- ensuring that all teachers use data effectively to monitor the progress of different groups of pupils and provide appropriate intervention as soon as possible.

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

Mark Sims
Her Majesty's Inspector