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Mrs E Clarke  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Clarke

### **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 15 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 satisfactory.

### **Achievement in English**

Achievement in English is satisfactory.

- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is average. There is a gap between standards in reading and writing, and girls perform better than boys in the English tests, especially in writing. Reading results improved last year with over half of all pupils reaching the higher Level 5.
- On the basis of prior assessment on entry into Year 3, pupils' progress is satisfactory across Key Stage 2. The proportion of pupils who make the expected rates of progress is also average. The school's monitoring and assessment data suggest that current progress has improved and that Year 6 pupils are on target to reach higher standards than last year.
- Most groups of pupils make similar rates of progress although progress is better for most pupils in reading than in writing. Some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress.

- Progress in writing in lessons observed was at least satisfactory and sometimes good. Pupils were friendly and keen to talk. They behaved very well in lessons and were enthusiastic about learning, especially when the teacher used creative approaches to motivate them. Some of the pupils were confident, and spoke clearly and well.

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

The quality of teaching in English is satisfactory.

- Pupils' enjoyment of English is mixed. The subject does not engage all of them equally. All pupils enjoy drama work and interactive lessons but often find writing difficult and find some lessons repetitive.
- The lessons observed included a number of positive features. Teaching was lively and enthusiastic. Relationships in lessons were strong. Pupils enjoyed imaginative approaches such as teacher-recorded videos and the Shakespeare work in Year 5. Lessons were well planned and teachers worked hard to match tasks with different levels of ability. For example, a range of resources, sentence starters and frames were provided to support different groups of pupils with writing. There were times, however, when this limited opportunities for more able pupils to work independently and make their own decisions about writing. Teachers modelled writing effectively for pupils and some good peer-assessment enabled pupils to learn from each other.
- Teachers focused well on the technical aspects of writing, such as the openings of sentences or the use of adjectives. There was less time for pupils to talk and think about the content and ideas for their writing. Tasks sometimes lacked a clear context or sense of purpose. There was also a tendency for teachers to over-complicate writing by emphasising a wide range of criteria instead of identifying more clearly the particular writing focus within individual lessons.
- Pupils all know what their targets are in English and some of them have a good understanding of the small steps needed to help them reach those targets. Marking varies in quality but the best is detailed and identifies areas for improvement effectively.

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

The curriculum in English is good.

- There are some innovative elements to the taught curriculum. This includes the Shakespeare and drama unit in Year 5, some interesting work on moving-image texts, and developing efforts to provide a curriculum that engages pupils, particularly boys.
- The curriculum is enriched well by a number of initiatives. The school runs film and drama clubs and an ambitious Christmas production involves many of the pupils. Some pupils attend extra literacy sessions at the local rugby club and there are visits to the public library as well as work with authors.

- The reading curriculum is effective. Pupils enjoy reading, including shared whole-class texts, and their progress is supported effectively by well-planned guided reading lessons and monitored home-reading.
- There is a consistent approach to teaching writing across the school. This includes a good emphasis on spelling and handwriting and this leads to good standards of presentation in books. Some engaging topics have been chosen for pupils' unaided writing sessions.

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

Leadership and management in English are satisfactory.

- Pupils' progress is monitored carefully; this includes the performance of the different groups of pupils in the school. This is well used to identify those pupils who need additional support in English.
- Senior leaders and managers are clear about the need to improve attainment in writing. They have identified a range of appropriate strategies and developed a consistent whole-school policy. However, the action plan lacks specificity about how teaching might be developed to enhance pupils' progress with writing.
- There are very good links with other schools and the wider community to develop literacy skills across the area.
- Lesson observations are used effectively to provide feedback to teachers on pupils' learning and the school is increasing its use of work sampling to monitor progress. The school is involved in helpful collaborative work to moderate standards in English across the cluster.

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

- improving pupils' achievement in writing by:
  - providing pupils with time to consider fully the content and ideas of their writing, including a clearer sense of purpose and audience
  - clarifying the emphasis on particular aspects of writing within individual lessons
  - providing opportunities for the more able pupils to work independently and to make their own decisions about writing.

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**