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Ms L Barclay  
Headteacher  
Redbridge Community School  
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Hampshire  
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Dear Ms Barclay

### **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 15 and 16 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of 10 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is outstanding.

### **Achievement in English**

Achievement in English is outstanding.

- Students start with exceptionally poor language and communication skills. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is more than twice the national average. All groups, including the very large number of students identified as eligible for free school meals, make outstanding progress in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Their impressive overall progress is underpinned by the English department's highly effective strategies to improve literacy across the curriculum.
- There is a steady upward trend in attainment. The proportion of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, almost doubled between 2008 and 2010, with most students significantly exceeding predictions based on levels reached at the end of Year 6. In 2010, well over half gained A\* to C grades in English or English Language.

- Intensive mentoring ensures that those students at risk of underachievement remain focused and make good or better progress. Support for less able or less confident students and for those with special educational needs and/or difficulties is also extremely effective. The Hearing Impaired Resource for Southampton is based in the school; these students work happily and successfully alongside their mainstream contemporaries.
- Students respond positively to challenging targets. They work together constructively in mixed-ability classes, volunteer ideas confidently and enjoy their own and each other's successes.

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

The quality of teaching in English is outstanding.

- Students point to teachers' commitment and skills as the key to their own achievement. A Year 7 boy spoke for many: 'The teachers are always ready to help - twenty-four/seven!' Among teaching strengths are: secure and enthusiastic subject knowledge; well-informed planning that reflects students' diverse learning styles and maintains their interest; productive questioning skills; effective deployment of teaching assistants; and confident use of appropriate technology. Students clearly enjoy the subject, agreeing that most lessons 'go with a flow' and are successfully interactive.
- Marking of work most often combines encouragement with specific guidance on how to improve.
- Students' learning is less effective on the few occasions when pace and timing are not well matched to activities, the possibilities of a topic are not sufficiently explored before students tackle the task, and the most able are not fully challenged.

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

The quality of the curriculum in English is outstanding.

- Given students' very limited writing and reading levels on entry, the focus on extending and reinforcing skills is entirely appropriate. This is developed through exploration of novels, drama and poetry and of non-fiction and moving-image texts. Students are encouraged to read widely and to develop an appreciation of language. Key Stage 3 students feel well served: 'All the stuff we learn - we need.' The department is also adjusting very successfully to changing GCSE requirements.
- The core curriculum is complemented by extra-curricular initiatives such as: the GCSE Academy, to support underperforming students in Year 9; Redbridge Readers to encourage reading for pleasure in Key Stage 3; and one-to-one tuition to meet individual needs. Considerable progress is being made in raising aspirations and developing active support among parents and carers.

- Cross-curricular links are strong, developed partly through initiatives such as the 'flexible Friday' programme and also through sharing of expertise across subjects so that, for example, strategies to improve students' literacy are incorporated across the curriculum.

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

Leadership and management in English are outstanding

- With your strong support, the head of department sets ambitious targets and successfully encourages his team of well-qualified and committed teachers to be enterprising and inventive. Rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning ensures that creative approaches do raise standards. Information about students' attainment and progress is very effectively used to shape planning and to identify areas for particular support.
- Preparation for students' transition from Year 6 is effective and includes discussion with feeder schools to identify particular needs, and 'taster' lessons to introduce students to the department's approach to teaching and learning. Opportunities are limited for wider collaboration with local primary schools over curriculum planning and assessment to promote continuity of learning.

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

- reinforcing current strategies to raise attainment by:
  - ensuring that teachers manage pace and time effectively in lessons to allow less confident students to tackle tasks successfully
  - consistently challenging able students to extend their range of thinking and expression
  - extending current links with primary schools to develop consistency of assessment and continuity of learning in the transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3.

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**