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Mr M A Perry
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Perry

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 22 and 23 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.

- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 has been consistently high over a number of years in both English and English literature GCSEs. Most students in the school take both examinations. In the most recent cohort, 80% achieved A* to C grades in English language and 84% in English literature. In both, 25% of students achieved A* or A grades. This is well above national averages. Attainment is high throughout both key stages, and temporary dips, such as in Year 9 last year, are identified early and resolved. Particular strengths are in reading and speaking and listening, with core skills in writing rapidly improving, especially in Key Stage 4. Presentation skills are a weakness, however, especially in Key Stage 3.
- Students' attainment when they start school in Year 7 is around the expected levels in English. They make good progress in Key Stage 3, and this is accelerated in Key Stage 4, where progress is outstanding. Although

there are no significantly underperforming groups, the school has rightly recognised that, despite being well above average, boys do not achieve as well as girls, and have put in place highly effective strategies to successfully address this. Students who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make exceptionally good progress, relative to their starting points, because they are supported extremely well through, for example, highly successful intervention groups.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is outstanding.

- The teaching observed was never less than good and half was outstanding. Lessons are exceptionally well planned to take full account of the students' prior learning and wide range of needs and abilities. Activities are very imaginative and incisive questioning ensures that there is a brisk pace of learning in lessons. Enthusiastic and energetic teaching engages and challenges all students extremely well. As a result, students make excellent progress in lessons, and many share their teachers' passion for the subject.
- Behaviour is good overall, and on the rare occasions where it interrupts the pace of learning, teachers skilfully and swiftly resolve the problem. Teaching and learning in English lessons are further enhanced by the clear links that are made with media studies, drama and information and communication technology. A key strength is the personalised nature of the teaching and students appreciate the individual support that they are given. As one student commented: 'my teacher has given me a lot of extra help with my reading'.
- Assessment and monitoring systems are very well established and are being used very effectively to inform the planning of lessons and identify where further intervention is needed. Students, especially in Years 7 and 8, are using detailed assessment sheets to identify, with their teachers, where they need to improve to achieve their National Curriculum target levels. Marking is accurate, evaluative and provides students with clear guidance on how to improve their work.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is outstanding.

- The curriculum is rich and interesting and provides excellent support for teaching and learning. It is extremely well planned to ensure a progression in developing key skills in reading, speaking and listening and writing. It also has sufficient flexibility to allow for creativity and innovation so that the curriculum is exceptionally well focused on meeting the students' needs.
- Set texts are successfully inspiring students' enthusiasm for poetry and literature, and units which focus on writing are imaginative and result in high-quality extended writing from students. They therefore start their

GCSE course work with very positive attitudes towards both language and literature.

- The curriculum is further enriched through close links with other subjects and a wide range of activities, such as well-designed 'impact days', visits from writers and regular opportunities for students to become involved in productions such as 'Grease' and 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are outstanding.

- Under the inspirational and highly regarded leadership of the head of department, there is a palpable sense of collegiality and commitment to ensuring the best possible outcomes for all students, regardless of their ability. Targets are clear and challenging.
- A well-established cycle of review results in ongoing improvement and indicates clearly the outstanding capacity to improve still further. Self-evaluation is accurate and based on rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning and careful analysis of progress and attainment data. This, in turn, accurately informs short-term interventions and longer-term strategic planning, which is kept under regular review.
- Improvement is evident in terms of outcomes, but links to the whole-school improvement plan are less clear. The department is extremely well resourced and this also enhances the provision.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the standard of presentation of students' written work, especially in 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

Chris Nye
Her Majesty's Inspector