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Ms A Moller
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Moller

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 17 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; observation of three lessons; and shorter visits to observe a guided reading session and a phonics session.

The overall effectiveness of English is outstanding.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good and improving.

- Test results at the end of Key Stage 2 show that attainment has varied over recent years between average and above average. The school's moderated assessment of attainment in 2010 suggests that it was above average. Evidence from the inspection broadly confirmed this view. Standards are especially high in speaking and listening. The gap between reading and writing, and between the standards reached by boys and girls, has closed and was less than the national average last year. The school's assessment evidence indicates that attainment is likely to remain above average at the end of Key Stage 2 over the two next years.
- Pupils' progress is good and has especially improved in writing. There are no significant variations in the rates of progress of different groups in the

school. Performance data suggest that some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make particularly good progress.

- Pupils are very positive about learning. They listen carefully to their teachers and respond well to the challenge to think for themselves. They are keen to contribute in class and many pupils express their ideas orally with considerable confidence and maturity.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Lessons observed were at least good, with a number of outstanding features. However, the school acknowledges that there is some variability in the quality of teaching across the school and that this affects pupils' overall progress.
- Pupils enjoy English. They especially like lessons that involve drama and information and communication technology (ICT) to make learning interactive. They develop very positive attitudes towards both reading and writing.
- Lessons observed were characterised by imaginative approaches and positive responses from pupils. Relationships were very good and classroom assistants provided close, targeted support for less able pupils. Teachers modelled writing well and there was good emphasis on pupils developing re-drafting skills. Expectations were high and pupils had good opportunities to develop their oral skills in all lessons. Resources were varied and teachers made good use of ICT. The Year 6 lesson was particularly full of ideas that helped to stimulate pupils.
- When managing whole-class discussion, teachers tended to rely too much on a 'hands-up' approach, thus limiting the contribution of some of the less confident pupils. Over-complicated learning objectives for individual lessons sometimes also constrained the pupils' progress.
- The school has developed a coherent and consistent approach to marking and feedback. Specific targets are generated through teachers' marking and, at best, this works well as teachers continue to reinforce previously identified areas for improvement. Clear targets are also set within guided reading and writing sessions. However, pupils' understanding of what they need to do to improve their work remains variable.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The curriculum in English is outstanding.

- The school has a very clear and distinct curriculum, with English firmly at the centre. Links with other subjects are well developed and provide pupils with good contexts for their writing. Topics are introduced in a creative and stimulating manner that helps to motivate pupils. Good-quality, challenging texts are integrated effectively into all topics.
- The English curriculum is enlivened by frequent opportunities for drama and oral work. The range of drama work includes practical, classroom

approaches, school productions and an impressive range of out-of-school links with organisations such as the National Theatre. As a result, all classes experience live theatre on a regular basis. Partnerships with external organisations are very strong and considerably enrich work in English. ICT is well used in English and this includes opportunities for pupils to use laptops for writing and research as well as work creating their own moving-image texts.

- Pupils are very keen on reading and the development of the school library and the improvement of resources have contributed significantly to promoting pupils' independent reading.
- Senior leaders and managers continue to develop the curriculum in thoughtful and original ways. At present, pupils are being encouraged to reflect on their own learning and the use of reading journals and learning logs is making them more questioning.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are outstanding.

- Senior leaders and managers have overseen an improvement in attainment in English as well as the development of an innovative and effective curriculum. The school has a strong vision and sense of direction for English. Senior leaders are reflective and ambitious. The subject action plan is thoughtful and identifies some well-chosen areas for development. Consequently, the school has a very good capacity for further improvement.
- Self-evaluation is secure. The school monitors pupils' performance effectively and has detailed evidence about the achievement of the different groups in the school. Evidence from monitoring is used well to provide feedback to teachers on areas for improvement. For example, feedback from lesson observations is honest and focused directly on improving the quality of pupils' learning.
- There is a good level of subject knowledge within the school. The subject leader has been very well deployed over the past year on a range of tasks including providing training for colleagues, moderating standards, supporting individual teachers and developing the school library.
- Teachers are encouraged to be creative and to 'take risks' in engaging pupils and enhancing their learning. This shows positively in the use of imaginative approaches to teaching in lessons.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the consistency of teaching across the school by:
 - clarifying the particular priority for learning in English within individual lessons
 - ensuring that teachers' management of discussions enables all pupils to contribute fully.

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