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14 June 2011

Ms K Holmes
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Ms Holmes

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 23 May 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 and a phonics session.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- Attainment is broadly average and improving, although it varies from year to year in such a small school.
- The school's data indicate that pupils' current attainment across reading, writing, speaking and listening is broadly average in Year 6 and higher in reading than in writing. The data indicate that attainment is higher in other year groups.
- The quality of pupils' learning is good. Pupils behave well and they are interested and engaged in their lessons. They particularly enjoy reading, role play and using information and communication technology (ICT).
- Over the past three years, pupils made satisfactory progress in English. However, most of the current pupils are making good progress, although

some of the older and more able pupils in each of the mixed-age classes are insufficiently challenged to reach the higher levels in writing.

- There are no significant variations in achievement between different groups of pupils.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- The key, characteristic strengths of teaching noted during the visit are: interesting contexts for learning; effective use of resources including interactive whiteboards; and engaging pupils in independent learning, for example discussing and brainstorming ideas, role play and peer-assessment. The most effective lessons are planned well to lead pupils from their prior knowledge to new learning. They include good planning for teaching assistants and opportunities for assessing pupils' progress.
- While planning includes different expectations for the range of ages and needs in the class, insufficient use is made of pupils' targets to challenge more able pupils to reach the higher levels in writing and to support those less able with spelling.
- Pupils say that they are making more progress in reading than in writing. They read for pleasure and borrow books from the attractive school library. Pupils claim they are not making as much progress in writing because they find spelling difficult. They also say they would welcome more challenging tasks.
- The use of assessment is satisfactory. Assessing Pupils' Progress guidelines are used well to set group and individual curricular targets. When marking pupils' books, teachers include encouraging comments but few 'next steps' for improvement to reinforce the targets.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- The curriculum for English is broad and balanced and includes good opportunities for media, wider reading, drama, ICT and phonics. While longer-term planning is good, teachers' weekly plans are variable. The most structured weekly plans promote the most progress.
- The school has adopted a lively, storytelling approach to English and this is improving pupils' writing skills. For example, pupils saw a film of Roald Dahl's 'Fantastic Mr Fox' which inspired them to write stories, descriptions, plays, poetry, letters and reports. They will also visit the Minack Theatre to watch a live performance.
- Cross-curricular work is engaging all pupils, and particularly boys, in English. It includes topics such as: 'Plant Hunters' with links to history; 'Dream Catchers' which involves aboriginal stories; and 'The Iron Age' involving a workshop at the county museum.

- Pupils' work in English is enhanced very well by an outstanding range of enrichment activities including: visits to the theatre and places of interest; visiting authors and theatre groups; the drama club performances for the village community; interviewing local newspaper editors and journalists; and writing emails to pupils in the partner school. Pupils in the two schools combined to make a cake of their villages. It measured eight square feet and inspired some good creative writing. Pupils interviewed village residents and wrote and performed a play based on their stories. In addition, Year 6 pupils supported 'silver surfers', older residents who attended after-school ICT training.
- The curriculum is flexible to meet the needs of all pupils. Well-trained teaching assistants provide very effective support for the teaching of phonics and for identified underachieving pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The support enables the pupils to achieve as well as their peers.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

The effectiveness of leadership and management in English is good.

- Senior leaders have inspired all staff to adopt their vision of providing 'exciting, fun and memorable experiences' in English, particularly through storytelling. As a result of performance management and well-targeted training, the quality of teaching is improving.
- Accurate self-evaluation informs the most important priorities for the school improvement plan, including handwriting and extended writing. The wide range of monitoring and evaluation strategies includes analysis of pupil progress data, observation of lessons and examination of teachers' planning and pupils' workbooks. In addition, the local authority provides detailed evaluation of tests taken by the pupils, which also helps to inform priorities.
- Given the robust systems for self-evaluation, particularly for tracking pupils' progress, and the rising trend in attainment, the capacity for further improvement in English is good.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- using pupils' targets to challenge more able pupils to reach the higher levels in writing and to support those less able with spelling
- identifying 'next steps' more systematically when marking pupils' work
- ensuring a consistently good approach to weekly lesson planning.

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

Sue Frater
Her Majesty's Inspector