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Mrs J Gleeson  
Headteacher  
St George's CofE VA Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Gleeson

### **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 17 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 five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

### **Achievement in English**

Achievement in English is good and improving.

- Pupils' attainment by the time they leave the school is above average. Last year, nearly half of Year 6 pupils reached Level 5. Given their broadly average starting points, they make good progress overall.
- Children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage has, in the recent past, been less positive. Current improvements have had a good effect. Although attainment by Year 2 is broadly average, younger classes show better developed skills for writing than previously.
- Pupils' attainment is often higher in reading than writing, and boys do less well than girls overall. The school is tackling both issues effectively and can identify improvements. Both boys and girls greatly enjoy English and see its importance to their lives. However, a sample of their written work indicates lower levels of competence for boys.

## **Quality of teaching in English**

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Pupils say teaching is excitingly varied. They understand their targets for reading and writing, and find teachers very supportive. Relationships are very strong and lead to excellent behaviour.
- In the observed lessons, teachers used a wide variety of engaging teaching styles well, including taking on roles in a 'dramatic enquiry' involving three classes and leading a philosophical discussion circle. Classroom assistants, too, play an active part in these tasks. Questioning is a strength and teachers successfully lead pupils to empathise and reflect.
- In one outstandingly well led Early Years Foundation Stage session, a blend of engaging activities and meticulous assessment ensured that every child made rapid progress in recognising, sounding and writing combinations of letters.
- In a Key Stage 1 session, the teacher's very effective use of pupils' ideas, modelling of storytelling skills and quiet individual guidance led the whole class to write independently, coherently and at length.
- Some teaching, however, missed opportunities for high challenge and accelerating progress. There was scope for more deliberation and decision-making by pairs or small groups of pupils as part of speaking and listening activities. The variable quality of pupils' writing reflects some inconsistency in how well teachers guide pupils to develop and present their ideas.

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

The quality of the curriculum in English is outstanding.

- Pupils enjoy a rich and varied curriculum. Teams of teachers and the adults who work with them meet to plan distinctive, topical cross-curricular schemes. These reflect the interests of the pupils and their community, cover essential language skills and give realistic contexts for writing for different purposes. Informative and stimulating displays throughout the school reflect the current enquiries and goals. Pupils look forward to each new project.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, provision for language development is now highly responsive to children's interests and needs. Practitioners skilfully engage children in talking and mark-making wherever there is an opportunity – often on the floor!
- Work with partners in the creative arts has enhanced the curriculum. Teachers make effective use of the excellent resources to create dramatic experiences for pupils to explore. There are good opportunities to use modern communications. Pupils use media technology, for example, when making news broadcasts and computers to write for the school newsletter.

- A varied range of reading is incorporated into schemes and teachers encourage wider reading by systematically recommending books to individuals. Special events, such as competitions and performances which involve the whole school provide more reasons for enjoyment of English.

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

Leadership and management in English are outstanding.

- There is a clear and well-shared sense of direction for the subject. This is shaped by the subject leader and other senior leaders who work closely together to communicate high expectations.
- Leaders have made very good use of monitoring, professional development and the support of partners to develop the expertise of a capable and dynamic staff team. Teachers are enthusiastic about further improving their practice.
- Searching and honest self-evaluation has led to a realistic, clearly focused improvement plan for the areas where performance is not yet outstanding. This is being implemented well. While the impact has yet to show in pupils' final outcomes, there are clear signs that provision has improved and achievement is rising in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. The capacity to build on this is excellent.

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

- raising attainment in writing, by further improving teachers' effectiveness in helping pupils to develop and present their ideas.

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

**Susan Bowles**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**