

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr C Tay
Headteacher
Longden CofE Primary School
Plealey Road
Longden
Shrewsbury
SY5 8EX

Dear Mr Tay

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 21 June 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 parts of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- Attainment in English at the end of Key Stage 2 has been consistently average or above during recent years. The school's monitoring and assessment data, the accuracy of which was confirmed during the inspection, suggest that above average attainment has been maintained during the current year. Pupils make good progress throughout the Key Stage, although achievement is higher in reading than in writing and standards are lower in handwriting. Achievement in speaking and listening is a particular strength because of the strong focus placed on this area of the pupils' learning and development.

- In Key Stage 1, attainment has been above average for two years. The proportion of pupils achieving or exceeding the expected level in reading and writing is well above average, and the percentage achieving the higher levels is above average in reading and more than double that found nationally in writing.
- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills in communications, language and literacy slightly below that expected for their age. They make good progress so that most achieve, and some exceed expected levels by the time they transfer to Key Stage 1.
- There are no underperforming groups. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress, relative to their starting points. This is because interventions are carefully structured and planned to include imaginative activities which motivate pupils well.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- The teaching observed was good because teachers have high expectations of their pupils. Imaginative activities are well planned to take full account of the wide age and ability range of the pupils in each class and this helps to motivate them. The pace of lessons is good overall, although occasionally this slows, for example at transition points. Nevertheless, pupils enjoy their lessons and make good progress in them as a result.
- Relationships between pupils and adults are excellent and a common feature is the calm and orderly atmosphere in classes, which encourages pupils' good behaviour. Teachers have good subject knowledge, especially in literature, and use their enthusiasm well to inspire pupils, for example in a drama lesson on 'The Tempest' by William Shakespeare. The teaching of phonics is well established and is supporting pupils' early reading and writing effectively. Ongoing assessment techniques, such as probing questioning by teachers and the use of self- and peer-assessment by pupils, are supporting and extending pupils' learning effectively.
- Rigorous assessment and monitoring systems are accurately identifying pupils' weaknesses and monitoring their progress in addressing these. This enables challenging individual targets to be set and pupils are generally aware of what these are. However, the quality of marking varies. At best, it provides clear guidance on how to improve and some pupils are starting to routinely assess their own work against success criteria, thus encouraging them to take more responsibility for their own learning. However, this is not yet fully embedded and sometimes teachers' written comments, while always positive and encouraging, are not sufficiently evaluative.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is outstanding.

- The distinctive and extremely well-planned curriculum is providing a very effective foundation for the provision of English throughout the school. It is successfully meeting the varying needs of pupils and is helping to inspire many to become enthusiastic and independent readers and writers.
- Strong features are the way in which the progression and development of English skills are planned and the very effective cohesion between reading, writing, speaking and listening. There are clear links to other aspects of the curriculum, such as humanities, through an emphasis on developing research and study skills. Poetry, literature and drama are integrated well and pupils speak enthusiastically of their work in these areas.
- The way in which the curriculum is enriched through, for example, visiting authors, regular theatre trips and book festivals is outstanding. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic and many have excellent knowledge, understanding and appreciation of both modern and traditional stories, poems and plays.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

The effectiveness of leadership and management in English is good.

- Teachers share a common understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in English and, under your effective leadership, there is a committed and collegiate approach towards driving improvement. Teachers are well trained and work cooperatively to successfully adapt innovations, such as in assessing pupils' progress, to suit the needs of the school. Monitoring and effective assessment systems are identifying challenging school targets and this is helping to inform improvement planning.
- Resources are well managed. Although the library is currently underdeveloped, the school has realistic plans in place to address this. As a result of effective leadership and consistently good outcomes, the school is demonstrating a good capacity to sustain the improvements that it has made.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- strengthening existing marking procedures by ensuring that teachers' written comments are consistently evaluative and that the good practice in pupils' written self-assessment is further extended
- improving the quality of pupils' handwriting, especially in Key Stage 2.

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