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Mrs C Knight
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Knight

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 16 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 six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- Attainment across Key Stages 1 and 2 has been well above average for at least three years, with particular strengths in reading, speaking and listening. The school did not participate in the Key Stage 2 national tests in 2011 but carefully moderated in-school assessments show the proportion of pupils gaining Level 4 or above in reading, writing and English as exceeding school targets and as higher than the county and national averages. In Key Stage 1, the proportion gaining Level 2 or above was also higher than the county and national averages, with particular improvement in boys' speaking, listening and writing skills.
- Most pupils arrive with well-developed communication and literacy skills. Scrutiny of pupils' work and observation of lessons support detailed school data showing good progress across the ability range in each year. The effectiveness of support for those who find aspects of English difficult and of extension activities for the most able can be seen in the exceptionally

high reading and spelling scores achieved by the most able - up to six years ahead of their calendar age - and the two or more levels of progress made consistently by those identified as having moderate special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has rightly identified girls working towards Level 3 in Key Stage 1 as a group that would benefit from additional challenge.

- Pupils are willing learners, keen to meet expectations. They enjoy group work and are developing the confidence and skills needed to evaluate their own work and that of their contemporaries. They respond particularly well when given opportunities to use their initiative and to explore ideas actively, through drama for example.
- Boys as well as girls clearly enjoy reading and do so for pleasure at home as well as at school. They are keen to discuss and recommend what they have read, with boys favouring non-fiction.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Much of the teaching is good or better, with examples of excellent practice, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. Strengths include: confident and enthusiastically communicated subject knowledge; careful planning which sets out clearly what pupils are expected to learn; constructive approaches to assessment woven through each lesson; and effective deployment of teaching assistants, primarily to support less able and less confident learners.
- On occasion, opportunities are missed for pupils to explore ideas and make discoveries through carefully managed activities such as drama, role play and practical investigations. While pair and group work play an important part in pupils' learning, there is a tendency for one or two particularly confident pupils to dominate so that not all are equally involved.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is good

- The curriculum is topic-based and works on a two-year cycle. Pupils are involved in planning how topics are developed, setting out what they want to know and identifying relevant expertise and experience within their own family group that can be drawn on. The curriculum successfully responds to pupils' interests and needs and is freshly reviewed for each cohort. Careful curriculum mapping ensures that all National Curriculum requirements are met and that there is sustained skills development.
- With support from local authority advisers, there has been a shift from using a text as the starting point for planning to the topic itself, determining how it can be developed across subjects and choosing a key text to give it coherence. *The Hungry Caterpillar*, for example, provides the focus for Reception's mini-beast topic. This is proving very effective in

engaging pupils' interest and encouraging them to develop their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills across all subjects.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

The effectiveness of leadership and management in English is good.

- Senior leaders communicate a clear and ambitious vision for English as a key element in the school's topic-based curriculum. Subjects are grouped to help middle managers plan cross-curricular topics effectively, support each other and share good practice.
- There has been a successful drive to improve pupils' literacy skills, especially spelling, and to strengthen their ability to work confidently in different genres. Senior and middle leaders have carefully monitored the impact on pupils' progress of curriculum development and used this information to set priorities for the professional development of teachers and learning support assistants.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that there are consistently high expectations and challenge for more able pupils in Key Stage 1
- extending pupils' opportunities to explore and develop ideas through activities, such as drama and role play.

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

Patricia Metham
Her Majesty's Inspector