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Mrs J Marshall  
Headteacher  
The Marston Thorold's Charity Church of England School  
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Marston  
Grantham  
NG32 2HQ

Dear Mrs Marshall

### **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 13 July 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 three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

### **Achievement in English**

Achievement in English is good and improving.

- The attainment of Year 6 pupils in national tests varies from year to year but is generally above average. Provisional results for Year 6 pupils in 2011 improved on 2010, with all pupils gaining Level 4 and at least half achieving Level 5.
- Year 6 pupils' attainment is similar for reading and writing, but across the school, reading is stronger than writing. Pupils speak with confidence and readily explain their ideas.
- Year 6 pupils make good progress from their starting points although progress does vary more for other year groups. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have attainment above that found nationally and most make good progress. There is no greater gap between the performance of boys and girls than that found nationally.

- In lessons, pupils make good and sometimes outstanding progress. They have very positive attitudes to learning, concentrate well and listen carefully. They collaborate well in pairs and small groups. Older pupils show a keen interest in words and in improving their use of vocabulary. They assess their own work confidently.

### **Quality of teaching in English**

The quality of teaching in English is good with some outstanding features.

- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge which they use very effectively to set high expectations for pupils, particularly in knowledge of subject terms and understanding of grammar.
- Teachers' planning is detailed. They set clear objectives for learning, supported by criteria for success, which pupils use well to shape and assess their work.
- Teachers use a good range of activities to engage pupils' interest. Older pupils use their 'writers' toolkit' notebooks effectively to explore ideas and experiment with language.
- In the best lessons, teachers use questions very effectively to develop pupils' understanding and to help them refine ideas. However, in some lessons, teachers do not provide pupils with opportunities to discuss answers or time to think before venturing an answer.
- Teachers assess pupils' work regularly and review it together to ensure that standards are accurate. Teachers' marking is thorough. They correct pupils' work, including key spelling or punctuation errors. In the best marking, they provide clear guidance to pupils on how to improve their work but this is not consistent across the school.

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

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- The curriculum is broad and covers the full range of texts and writing styles. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to think and write creatively. For example Years 5 and 6 enjoy composing poetry in a range of forms. A good range of intervention activities in phonics, reading and writing ensures that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress.
- Pupils have good opportunities to practise their skills in work across other subjects, for example retrieving information on the Japan tsunami and then writing reflective, personal responses or reporting aspects of the recent Royal Wedding, using computers to present their work.
- A good range of extra-curricular activities ensures that pupils are interested in English and have opportunities to consolidate what they have learnt. These include visits from an author and an animator, theatre groups, film club, school productions and writing for the Parish newsletter.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in English is good with some outstanding features.

- Senior staff have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development based on regular and rigorous analysis of pupils' progress. They set a very clear direction for English and select carefully the approaches which are best suited to improving identified aspects of work. For example, they adjusted the system used for assessing writing to provide better guidance for pupils on what to do.
- Teamwork across the school is good. Staff work together well in planning, discussing teaching methods and reviewing pupils' work. The approaches to encouraging pupils' interest in words, understanding of spelling and grammar, and enjoyment of writing are consistent.
- The subject leader uses her role as a lead literacy teacher well to bring expertise and ideas into the school and to share effective practice with other staff. The school is ambitious and committed to continuous improvement.

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

- accelerating pupils' progress further across the school by ensuring that all teachers:
  - use questions skilfully to check pupils' understanding, providing discussion or thinking time as necessary
  - make clear in their marking exactly how pupils may improve their work.

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

**Martin Cragg**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**