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Mr I Johnstone
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Johnstone

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 12 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 four lessons; and a brief visit to a guided reading session.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- Small year groups, and the high inward mobility of pupils during Key Stage 2, result in considerable fluctuation in attainment in English. Nevertheless, in most year groups, pupils' overall attainment in English is higher than expected for their age. Despite variations from year to year, there is a discernible underlying upward trend in attainment at Key Stage 1.
- Attainment in writing lags behind that in reading.
- For the most part, pupils are making good progress in English. For some pupils, progress is outstanding but also there are some pockets of underachievement.
- Pupils' positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour support their achievement well.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- The teaching seen was predominantly of a good quality. Staff have very positive relationships with pupils. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and they usually adjust the work effectively to cater for the mixed-age classes. Information and communication technology is often used well to support teaching and learning.
- The most effective teaching enthused pupils with a snappy pace and fun, activity-based sessions.
- In some lessons, the pace was more laboured, so pupils had too little time to produce work of quality, and, at times, activities lacked challenge for a few pupils. Adjustments to lessons to meet pupils' varied learning needs are sometimes stronger for the slower learners than for the most able.
- Marking of pupils' written work is of variable quality. In English books, some marking is incisive and helpful for pupils but sometimes there are no suggestions for improvement or they are too broad to focus pupils' next efforts. When pupils undertake written work in other subjects, aspects of English are not marked rigorously.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- The curriculum in English is planned carefully and reviewed regularly. It gives sufficient attention to all elements, including drama and media.
- Opportunities for writing across the curriculum are well organised and often stimulated by educational visits. Teachers have begun to plan more appealing writing tasks, especially to interest boys.
- A good range of successful, bespoke interventions supports pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

The effectiveness of leadership and management in English is good.

- Teamwork is strong and staff at all levels are committed to promoting pupils' achievement.
- You have a clear understanding of the effectiveness of English and priorities for development.
- At whole-school level, data from assessments of pupils' attainment and their rates of progress are used well to determine where changes might be made and to inform decisions about targeted support for pupils who could be doing better.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving pupils' achievement in writing, particularly by:
 - ensuring appropriate challenge for all pupils, especially the most able
 - strengthening the marking of pupils' written work in other subjects
 - providing sufficient time in lessons for pupils to write for sustained periods.

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

Pat Kime
Her Majesty's Inspector