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Mrs L Michell
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Michell

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 20 September 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 satisfactory.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is satisfactory.

- While standards of attainment fluctuate from year to year due to the small cohorts of pupils in the school, they are broadly in line with the national average.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress from their starting points. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress and their skills and understanding are above the expectation for their age range.
- The school rightly identified the writing of boys as an area for improvement. Effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) is motivating the boys to write with more interest. This includes teachers' use of interactive whiteboards, film and audio clips, and pupils' use of laptop computers to draft their writing and to share blogs with pupils in America. As a result, attainment in writing has improved.

- Pupils are eager to learn and they behave well. They work productively and enjoy activities such as role play and using laptop computers. In the lessons seen, opportunities were limited for the pupils to apply independent learning skills such as talking and writing in role-play areas, or researching, discussing and presenting their views.
- Effective intervention for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including one-to-one support and small group work provided by teaching assistants, enables these pupils to achieve well.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is satisfactory.

- The key strengths of teaching observed include: well-structured lessons; good relationships with pupils; effective use of interactive whiteboards to model new skills; and good-quality support from teaching assistants to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- In lessons observed, insufficient pace to learning and limited questioning and challenge for more able pupils inhibited further progress.
- The recent introduction of guidelines on assessing pupils' progress is enabling teachers to identify relevant curricular targets. While pupils are aware that they have targets, not all pupils can recall them or use them to improve their work. Teachers' marking does not consistently identify next steps to improvement.
- The teaching of phonics includes multi-sensory activities and the use of resources including magnetic letters and the interactive whiteboard. In lessons observed, pupils learnt to pronounce phonemes, and matched them with graphemes accurately although they did not have the opportunity to apply their learning in independent writing.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is satisfactory.

- The curriculum is sufficiently broad and balanced. In this small school of three classes, the curriculum is planned flexibly to accommodate up to three year groups per class. Planning is based appropriately on broad whole-school topics for each half term. Curriculum coverage is reviewed thoroughly to ensure that pupils cover all subject areas and skills.
- Enrichment activities provide a sense of relevance and purpose for the pupils' writing. For example, pupils have been involved in an enterprise activity of setting up a strawberries and cream stall at the local horse trials and preparing the invitations. Other activities include visiting theatre groups, a drama club and interviewing local residents.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

The effectiveness of leadership and management in English is good.

- Improvements in the quality of teaching and in curriculum planning are successfully addressing the dip in attainment in 2010.
- Self-evaluation is thorough, accurate and informs relevant priorities for further improvement. It includes analysis of pupils' progress, lesson observations, and examination of teachers' planning and pupils' workbooks.
- School development planning focuses suitably on improving standards in writing and the use of targets in teaching and learning. Monitoring and evaluation of the attainment and progress of all groups of pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are particularly thorough. Any underachievement is identified and addressed through appropriate intervention.
- Given the rigorous self-evaluation, the identification of relevant priorities and recent improvements, the school has a good capacity for further improvement in English.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising achievement by:
 - increasing the pace of learning, and the level of challenge and questioning, particularly for more able pupils
 - involving pupils in ways to improve their own work and identifying more clearly the next steps for improvement in marking.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop English in the school.

As 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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Sue Frater
Her Majesty's Inspector