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Ms M Lister  
Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Lister

### **Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: English**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 13 and 14 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of seven lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

### **Achievement in English**

Achievement in English is good.

- Standards have risen considerably in recent years and were above average at the end of Key Stage 4 last year. The number of students achieving A\* or A grades was also above average. The department enters all students for GCSE English Literature. Results are encouraging, given the higher than average entry rate. The rising trend in attainment is confirmed by the early entry results in English Literature for the current Year 11 students.
- Progress data are variable. However, the proportion of students achieving the expected levels of progress from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 has risen over recent years and was better than average last year.
- Evidence from lesson observation, work samples and discussion with students confirms that progress is good in English. Students are very keen

to do their best. They behave well and work hard in lessons. Some are especially confident and articulate in expressing ideas and opinions.

- There are no significant differences between the performances of different groups. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same progress as other students.

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

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Students enjoy English. They speak very positively about their lessons, praising their teachers' enthusiasm, approachability, support, and their ability to make lessons varied and stimulating.
- There were many strengths in lessons observed. Relationships were very good and lessons were lively and interactive. Teachers managed classes well and used a variety of approaches and resources to engage students. The best teaching was very effective in selecting the activities that would most enhance learning and checking the progress of students.
- In lessons where students' learning was satisfactory, the pace was sometimes excessive and teachers used too many activities. Learning objectives were sometimes too vague or overambitious and opportunities were missed to evaluate the learning of all students.
- Assessment is very good. Marking gives students clear feedback on strengths and weaknesses, with helpful targets for improvement. Students understand what they need to do to improve. There are consistent approaches across the department and assessment information is used well by staff as students move through the school.

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

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- The curriculum is well planned across both key stages. Assessment is integrated successfully into schemes of work. There are some innovative features to the English curriculum, including the use of single gender classes in Key Stage 4, a Year 7 transition unit, and units that address students' interests and concerns effectively.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, with good emphasis on drama activities, speaking and listening, and exploration of the nature of talk. There are currently too few opportunities at Key Stage 3 to use information and communication technology, including media technology.
- Students are encouraged to read widely and with interest through timetabled independent reading sessions across Key Stage 3.
- The department operates some distinctive enrichment activities including an annual newspaper project with students from a local university, initiatives to enhance reading, competitions, and theatre and writer visits. However, some students would welcome more opportunities for clubs or additional extra-curricular activities in English.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in English is good.

- The department is well led. As a result, there is a good sense of direction to work in English, based on clear, shared principles about the subject.
- Actions taken have led to higher standards. The department has improved the performance of its more able students and put in place effective measures to engage and challenge boys.
- Teachers work well together and share good practice. There is a good consistency across the department. Teachers are conscientious, reflective and keen to do well. The capacity for further improvement is good.
- Self-evaluation is accurate. It benefits from systematic and thorough tracking of students' progress. The department makes particularly good use of feedback from students and work sampling. Opportunities for lesson observations are limited at present and departmental actions plans lack specificity about how to enhance teaching and learning.

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

- increasing the proportion of teaching that is good or outstanding by:
  - improving the clarity of learning objectives and checking that students understand and are making progress during lessons
  - ensuring that the pace of lessons and the number of activities are appropriate in helping all students to learn well
  - using lesson observation and other evidence to produce an action plan to enhance teaching and its impact on learning.

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

**Philip Jarrett**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**