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Ms S Percy
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Percy

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 6 October 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; observation of seven lessons and of guided reading sessions in each key stage; and discussion with two senior staff from the secondary school to which many pupils transfer.

The overall effectiveness of English is outstanding.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is outstanding.

- Overall attainment in Key Stage 2 has been consistently well above average. Provisional results for 2011 indicate a continuing upward trend, with over 90% of boys and of girls achieving level 4. More than half of the girls in Year 6 achieved Level 5 while the proportion of boys attaining Level 5 was broadly average.
- Steps are being taken to close the gender gap - for example, by gearing texts and topics to boys' interests and by increasing the use of computers and media technology. Boys generally perform as well as girls in class, often taking the lead in group work, but their writing is less well developed. Well-directed interventions are, however, now improving boys' performance. Boys speak with pride of being among the 'high fivers'.

- Pupils currently in Years 5 and 6 and in last year's Year 6 entered the school with skills below those expected for their age, so their attainment represents excellent progress. Secure assessment across all key stages shows attainment rising in step with improving entry levels. Pupils' particular strengths are in speaking and listening, although writing is generally accurate, thoughtful and well presented.
- Pupils are very keen learners, responding enthusiastically to the variety of learning opportunities provided. They work well collaboratively, follow teachers' directions conscientiously and take their personal targets very seriously. As a Year 5 pupil remarked: 'We know how we're doing and what to do next.'
- Those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress as well as others, benefiting from one-to-one reading support and well-deployed support in mainstream lessons.

Quality of teaching in English

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

- There is a collegiate approach, with teachers sharing planning and, in effect, team teaching since the two-year curriculum cycle means that classes often share spaces and activities. Particular strengths include: secure subject knowledge; an excellent rapport with pupils; effective deployment of support staff; varied and productive use of computers and media technology; consistently applied strategies to check and reinforce pupils' understanding during lessons; and regular and constructive marking. Teachers often pose questions to prompt review and redrafting, to which pupils write responses, and the impact of marking is evident. Phonics are systematically and effectively taught in the Reception class and reinforced throughout Key Stage 1.
- Pupils speak highly of their teachers: 'They give us fun activities...They help us when we need it.' Pupils work happily in ability-based groups, confident that teachers are supporting them well and giving everyone a chance to participate: 'We do everything, so we don't feel left out.'
- Teachers give pupils very firm guidance on organising their work. While this clearly helps to embed important skills, there is limited evidence of independence and originality in pupils' books.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is outstanding.

- A carefully constructed framework ensures meticulous coverage of National Curriculum content and skills. Care is taken to integrate speaking and listening, varied technology, 'hot-seating' and role play within each unit. All units are designed to drive the development of skills and are linked well to engaging fiction and non-fiction texts.
- Planning works on a two-year cycle, with sufficient flexibility built in to allow cross-over between years so that, for example, the most able pupils

in Year 3 work alongside Year 4 pupils and respond well to that challenge. Less able or less confident pupils also feel well supported and able to develop at their own pace. Year 6 pupils were definite that this system does not inhibit progress: 'We do the same things but the tasks are harder.'

- As well as visiting authors and theatre groups and special events such as Book Week used to complement the mainstream curriculum, weekly clubs encourage the more able to extend their range – principally the Magazine Club and the Book Club.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

The effectiveness of leadership and management in English is outstanding.

- You present an extremely coherent, well-informed and confident vision for English. Substantial responsibility for curriculum development and the monitoring of teaching and learning have been very successfully delegated to middle managers, with continuity achieved through the school development plan. One of the senior leadership team has an overarching responsibility for literacy. The impact can be seen in rising attainment and strong progression from year to year.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing opportunities and incentives for pupils to be independent, challenging and imaginative, especially in their writing
- extending strategies to bring boys' writing up to the level of the girls'.

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

Patricia Metham
Her Majesty's Inspector