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Mr A Harvell  
Headteacher  
Axminster Community Primary School  
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Dear Mr Harvell

### **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 18 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; and observation of six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

### **Achievement in English**

Achievement in English is good.

- Attainment in English at the end of Key Stage 2 has been broadly in line with national averages for the past three years. In 2011, most Year 6 pupils achieved Level 4; however, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher level was below the national average. The school's own data show that attainment in writing is lower than reading. Attainment in speaking and listening is average.
- At Key Stage 1, attainment has been variable in recent years. In 2011, Year 2 pupils' attainment in writing was significantly below national average and reading also dipped to just below the national average. However, current school data show that attainment in Year 2 is broadly in line with national expectations.

- Pupils' progress across the school is good. No significant differences exist between the achievement of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers because of effective support and targeted intervention strategies.
- Children enter the Reception class with skills that are broadly in line with expectations for their age, although their communication, language and literacy skills are lower than the other areas of learning. They make good progress and by the time they transfer to Key Stage 1, pupils achieve and many exceed expectations in these areas.

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

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Pupils enjoy English lessons. Good relationships between adults and pupils support pupils to develop confidence and independence in their learning. Teaching assistants support learning well.
- Teachers make good use of assessment data and plan their lessons well, taking into account the various levels of ability within the class. Teachers have high expectations and, in the best lessons, pupils are challenged to achieve well. In one lesson observed, pupils were highly motivated to punctuate a short passage of writing correctly using speech marks and to identify the correct layout of the passage. They worked well collaboratively to achieve the objective and successfully demonstrated their understanding of speech punctuation.
- Where less effective teaching was observed, opportunities were missed to extend pupils' learning and the pace of learning was slowed by pupils sitting for too long on the carpet or being given inappropriate activities.
- Pupils' work is accurately marked with detailed and useful guidance. This is a consistent feature across the school. As a result, pupils know how to improve their work and many older pupils respond well to the comments made by their teacher. In addition, targets for improvement are set in reading and writing and pupils are eager to use the many opportunities provided to self-assess their learning against their targets and success criteria.

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

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- The curriculum is well planned to ensure that it is broad, balanced and meets the needs and interests of all pupils. Good links between subjects provide useful opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills in other areas of the curriculum.
- Theatre visits and wider opportunities are regularly planned to enhance pupils' learning experiences and provide an effective stimulus for learning.
- Reading for pleasure is promoted well. Teachers read stories and novels to their class and pupils show a keen interest in reading at home. Regular opportunities are now provided for pupils to engage in sustained writing

activities and initiatives such as 'Talk for Writing' have been introduced. However, as yet these have not had time to show sufficient impact on pupils' progress and the quality of their writing.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in English is good.

- The subject leaders have a very clear and accurate understanding of the strengths and areas to develop in English which is shared and embraced by all staff. There is a common commitment to high standards and driving improvement. This is because effective systems are in place to monitor pupils' learning and track their progress, and these lead to challenging but achievable targets. Discussions with pupils and the scrutiny of work are key features of this effective leadership, which is having a positive impact on improving the achievement of pupils.
- Senior leaders have correctly identified the most important areas for improvement in English which are included in the school's improvement plan. However, it is not always made clear how success will be measured against outcomes for pupils.

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

- raising attainment and improving pupils' progress in writing by:
  - ensuring that recently introduced initiatives are consistently implemented and have a positive impact on the quality of writing
  - identifying measureable success criteria in the improvement plan that focus clearly on improving outcomes for pupils.

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

**Ann Henderson**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**