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Mrs Z Sharman
Headteacher
Charlotte Sharman Primary School
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Dear Mrs Sharman

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 19 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 eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is satisfactory.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is satisfactory overall and good in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

- The Nursery and Reception classes are building a strong foundation for future learning. Current assessments show the upward trend being extended, with particular strengths in pupils' development of communication and language skills. Pupils respond well to the systematic approach taken to phonics. This steadily builds up their reading skills and develops their confidence in writing.
- Attainment and progress are uneven across Key Stages 1 and 2. While Key Stage 1 reading and writing levels remain below national averages, there is an upward trend in the proportion gaining the expected level at the end of Year 2. Few, however, achieve a higher level.

- Provisional results for 2011 show that the upward trend of recent years has not been sustained. Attainment remains below average. The school is taking action to tackle boys' underperformance, largely through changes to the curriculum. Most pupils are emphatic that English is fun but few find it challenging. Able pupils are not consistently prompted to stretch for a more analytical, innovative or independent approach.
- More pupils than is typical enter the school partway through their primary education and many arrive with limited English skills. With one-to-one support from specialist teaching assistants, sustained support in mainstream lessons and constructive links between the school and their families, these pupils settle quickly and progress as well as others.
- Pupils are keen to do well, confident, thoughtful and mutually supportive. They respond enthusiastically to opportunities to practise their English skills through activities such as drama and debates.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is satisfactory.

- All teaching is at least satisfactory, with good elements in each Key Stage. Strengths include: generally secure subject knowledge; varied approaches to match pupils' learning styles; sound questioning skills; regular feedback to pupils; extensive group and pair work; and appropriate use of technology.
- On occasion, learning opportunities are missed when the possibilities of an activity are not fully explored, and expectations for more able pupils are not consistently high. As pupils themselves remarked, teachers tend to disrupt their concentration by maintaining a commentary while pupils are tackling an independent or shared writing task. While much group work is productive, it is too often possible for one or two dominant pupils to limit the participation and learning of others.
- There is strong support for pupils' reading, with all pupils having frequent opportunities to read to a teacher or other adult. The library is well used as a resource and pupils understand its value. While many aspects of guided reading are well managed, it is possible for groups of children to make little progress when left unsupported throughout a session.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- Development of a cross-curricular approach, with a sustained focus on the development of skills, is beginning to have a positive impact. This is well demonstrated in pupils' topic books, in which clarity and accuracy of expression are identified as targets across subjects. This approach is also well-tailored to the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language.
- Among the curriculum's strengths are its flexibility and inclusiveness. Initiatives to involve pupils' families in their learning, for example through

programmes such as 'Better Reading Partners' are successfully extending work done in school and breaking down barriers to language acquisition.

- The school makes very good use of London's historical and cultural resources; for example, pupils work with the Southwark Theatre Education Project (STEP) and with the nearby Imperial War Museum. The impact of shared experiences - theatre trips and visiting authors, as well as school-based activities such as Reading Club - can be seen in pupils' writing.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

The effectiveness of leadership and management in English is satisfactory, with good features.

- You combine practical leadership with high aspirations. Since the previous full inspection, effective initiatives have included: professional development for staff, with a focus on literacy; a more engaging curriculum; and the positive involvement of parents and carers, including those from minority ethnic groups, in developing pupils' reading and speaking skills. While improvements are clear, the overall impact is still uneven.
- The curriculum and literacy coordinators have established clear priorities, which include: promoting reading; raising boys' attainment through topics and texts that engage their interest; and extending pupils' opportunities to be independent. At present, however, they have limited time and opportunity to work alongside staff and to monitor teaching and learning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising overall attainment in Key Stages 1 and 2, particularly the attainment of boys and of more able pupils
- extending and strengthening strategies to improve pupils' reading skills, with a particular focus on the management of guided reading sessions
- ensuring that the capacity of middle managers, both to promote and to monitor best practice in teaching and learning, is developed and supported in practical ways.

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