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Mrs K Robinson  
Headteacher  
Richard Rose Morton Academy  
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Dear Mrs Robinson

### **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 15 and 16 November 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 five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is satisfactory.

### **Achievement in English**

Achievement in English is satisfactory.

- Attainment is below average at the end of Key Stage 4. However, there has been considerable improvement in recent years with the proportion of students achieving grades A\* to C in English Language increasing from 31% in 2009 to 58% last year.
- A range of performance data suggests that progress in English has previously been inadequate, especially at Key Stage 3. However, the proportion of students making the expected rates of progress has improved and was broadly average last year. Progress is currently satisfactory. There are no significant differences between groups in the school although there is some evidence that girls do less well than boys, in contrast to the national trend.

- The school shares its sixth form provision with another local school. Attainment in English across the partnership is below average. Progress has been good in the AS English Literature course but much weaker in all other courses.

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

The quality of teaching in English is satisfactory.

- Teaching observed was uneven in quality. Strengths included: the clarity and impact of well-chosen learning objectives; good use of the extended lessons to plan towards a practical outcome; and a range of successful strategies and resources including drama, the internet, and group work.
- Where the management of behaviour was weak, students lost interest and made poor progress. In some lessons, there were difficulties making effective use of the extended lesson and the pace of learning dropped. In the best lessons, teachers used the space available and additional adult support well but this was inconsistent across the department.
- Students' views about English lessons were varied. They said that lessons sometimes lack variety and did not keep them fully interested. They also spoke of the repetitive nature of some lessons including constant emphasis on the 'Point, Evidence, Explain' (PEE) approach in writing.
- Assessment is satisfactory. Marking is often good with detailed comments and appropriate targets for students. Lessons reinforce students' understanding of levels and assessment criteria well. Despite this, students were often vague about how to improve their work partly because the targets are not always reinforced in subsequent pieces of work.

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

The quality of the curriculum in English is satisfactory.

- The new Key Stage 3 scheme of work is a potentially good one. There is a wide range of units with flexible use of time. The programme has been designed well to meet the needs of the students, especially boys, and contains some innovative units. However, at present, students' response is not wholly positive. There is too much emphasis in Key Stage 3 on a narrow range of skills required for GCSE examinations with a lack of balance between creative and analytical approaches to texts.
- There is an emphasis on promoting wider reading through a policy of silent reading at the start of each lesson. However, students currently have too little opportunity to use information and communication technology, including producing media texts.
- The Learning Resource Centre (LRC), and its manager, are well integrated into work in English. The LRC manager provides literacy support for students in Key Stage 3 with weaknesses in reading and spelling. She also runs several clubs for students and supports theme days with the English department. Use of the library has increased considerably.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in English is satisfactory.

- Although attainment remains below average, it has improved markedly over the past couple of years. A clear whole-school focus on higher standards in English is supported by strategies to enhance literacy skills across the curriculum. There is currently greater stability in the department and, although some staffing issues remain, the capacity for further improvement is at least satisfactory.
- Key members of the department have worked hard to develop detailed schemes of work across Key Stages 3 and 4. These provide clear guidance to all members of the department. The subject plan is well focused on raising standards and identifies a thoughtful agenda for improvement although there needs to be a clearer set of strategies for securing and enhancing teaching and learning across the department.
- Monitoring and evaluation are thorough. The school has carried out its own subject review; this involved lesson observations, discussions, work sampling and feedback from students. Routine monitoring activities involve the head of faculty and subject leaders. The range of evidence has been well used to provide a detailed view of the department's strengths and weaknesses.

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

- improving progress at Key Stage 3 by:
  - ensuring that lessons engage all students through a wide variety of activities, avoiding an overemphasis on a narrow range of GCSE skills
  - reviewing the balance of creative and analytical approaches to texts
- improving the consistency of teaching across the department by:
  - providing support and guidance, where needed, for effective behaviour management
  - ensuring that strategies are effective in maintaining students' learning throughout the extended lessons and building on existing good practice in using the space and additional adults available to promote 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.

Yours sincerely

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