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Mrs J Baker
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Baker

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 7 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 pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- Pupils make good progress from their starting points, which for many are below average. The quality of learning is good for all groups of pupils, and this is reflected in their very positive attitudes to English.
- Improvements in provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are now well established and having a positive impact on the reading and writing skills of younger pupils.
- Attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 is rising, although it is not significantly above average. Improvement has been most marked in writing, and the gap between boys' and girls' attainment has narrowed well. These improvements are due to more effective use of assessment information to focus teaching and a more relevant curriculum.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Teachers are knowledgeable and share their enthusiasm for literature and drama. They use language clearly to explain how language works. They enliven lessons with games, role play and discussions. Pupils like the fact that English lessons involve a good mix of activities.
- Resources are used well; for example, 'working wall' displays use writing by pupils to illustrate what the class is learning to do. Teachers encourage productive talk between pairs and small groups of pupils from an early age. Even so, opportunities are missed for pupils to use talk really well to prepare for independent work.
- Teachers know their pupils well and plan well-structured lessons matched to their finely assessed needs. Good examples were seen of well-matched support for individual needs which helped pupils' progress and attitudes.
- Older pupils have good understanding of their individual writing targets, because they are well-involved in assessment and receive clear and constructive feedback. However, there is some inconsistency in the effectiveness of marking, the explanation and use of targets and the quality of planning for different needs across all classes.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- Younger children are given a solid foundation in reading and writing. The school teaches the basic skills in a systematic and lively way. It is increasingly effective in involving parents and carers in supporting reading. Catch-up sessions for those who make slower progress are well managed and have shown a positive impact.
- The curriculum is evolving in interesting ways. Pupils find writing more exciting now because they learn about different genres and the skills of composition in the context of real audiences or topics. For example, boys and girls in Year 6 spoke knowledgeably about how they are designing and writing stories for their 'reading buddies' in Reception. Their illustrated interactive stories were inventive and accomplished.
- Pupils contribute to planning the schemes of work and the school sees how this has helped to improve boys' engagement and progress. Careful review of pupils' responses and progress in different areas of English is informing the design of new schemes of work. As a result, for example, the school is currently reviewing how it teaches more advanced reading skills.
- Wider reading is promoted effectively through reading logs, teachers' recommendations of new books or authors, book fairs and special events such as an 'Extreme Reading' competition. Pupils enjoy their opportunities to perform to audiences, a form of enrichment which has successfully involved boys as well as girls.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

The effectiveness of leadership and management in English is good.

- The subject leader, working closely with the school's well-informed and dynamic senior team, has set out a clear direction for the subject. Policy emphasises that English should be both stimulating and effective in building skills. Well-channelled efforts by the enthusiastic staff are leading to good improvement in both respects.
- The school has clear understanding about how performance has been improved in English, which areas need to improve next and how to do this. A good range of evidence is used to evaluate the effectiveness of English.
- The subject leader is a good role model and is involved in monitoring, staff training, and sharing new approaches. Teachers have clear guidance about expectations for the different areas of English, and about the use of modern technology and resources to support the progress of all groups of pupils. However, there is scope to give more helpful guidance about the key areas of English teaching which have been highlighted by self-evaluation as needing improvement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- further raising attainment, particularly in reading, by:
 - ensuring consistency in the quality of assessment across the school
 - clarifying guidance for staff in the key areas of English highlighted for improvement by self-evaluation.

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 will be sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Susan Bowles
Her Majesty's Inspector