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Mr WE Foreman
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Foreman

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 19 January 2012 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 documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of four lessons as well as short visits to see how pupils apply their reading, writing and communication skills across the curriculum.

The overall effectiveness of English is satisfactory and improving.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is satisfactory.

- Pupils enjoy learning and are keen to do their best, because lessons are lively and help them make progress.
- Attainment in English is in line with the national average, although it has drifted downwards in recent years. Boys have not, as a group, made the expected progress from their starting points at the end of Key Stage 1. Fewer pupils reached Level 5 in 2011 than the school expected.
- Recent and well-coordinated action to strengthen reading, writing and communication skills is having a positive effect on the progress of boys and girls in the school. The school's assessments show that most pupils in all groups are now on track to make at least the expected progress. Pupils'

work shows rising levels of skill. However, there is scope to improve pupils' independence in reading, speaking and writing, so that they demonstrate the higher levels more securely.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is satisfactory.

- Much teaching is good, but it is not yet consistent across the school in leading to good learning and progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants teach the basics of reading and writing well through regular, short and active sessions that are finely tuned to the understanding of their small groups of pupils. Teachers make sure that these skills are practised through regular homework and put to use throughout the school day. Their thorough marking gives pupils a clear idea of what they have achieved and what they need to do next.
- Talk between pupils, working in pairs, is frequently used. Good examples were observed of pupils having time to think and share their ideas, helping them understand how to do a task well. Modern technology enabled pupils to share in composing and editing writing. However, teachers missed some opportunities for pupils to express and develop their ideas fully and to take significant responsibility for independent choices. Sometimes this was because teachers over-controlled discussion, or did not sufficiently involve and challenge the full range of pupils in the class.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- The school makes English feel highly relevant to pupils by linking it to themes and questions, such as 'War! What is it good for?' Skills are practised in meaningful contexts linked to visits, performances, topical projects and other subjects. This explains why so many pupils in Year 6 like to write for their own satisfaction.
- It was easy to spot pupils applying the reading and writing strategies they have learnt in different contexts. This is because staff have wholeheartedly adopted the active and thematic approach to consolidating basic skills. Parents or carers have commented favourably on the effect, including on boys' enthusiasm for reading and writing. Care about vocabulary, spelling, sentence construction, punctuation and presentation is effectively emphasised across the school.
- The good emphasis on reading includes shared class novels and poetry, research activities, individual reading logs and personal recommendations from enthusiastic adult readers. As a result, older boys and girls talk confidently about their preferences and reading habits.
- Modern technology is used widely to capture pupils' interest and, increasingly, by pupils themselves, for example to present an argument in the form of a short film. However, there is scope to develop pupils' independence in tackling challenges for themselves. Opportunities for

speaking and listening are plentiful, but not always as challenging as possible.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

The effectiveness of leadership and management in English is good.

- Standards in English are showing early signs of improvement because of the clear direction being given by senior and middle leaders.
- The recent investment in resources and training for the whole staff is being followed up by supportive monitoring and coaching. Teachers are enthusiastic about refining their skills. This is developing consistency in teaching basic skills of reading and writing. It is also raising teachers' expectations about what they can achieve in all areas of English.
- There is a clear lead, too, for the way teachers plan a creative curriculum which gives pupils enjoyable opportunities to apply their understanding and skills at progressively higher levels. Care is taken to moderate assessments and fill any gaps in pupils' understanding.
- Leaders and managers have made a convincing start on improving outcomes and have suitable plans to go further. The focus on the quality of learning for boys and higher prior attainers needs to continue.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising achievement in English by:
 - increasing pupils' independence, so that they demonstrate more securely the higher levels of attainment in speaking and listening, reading and writing
 - ensuring that boys and higher prior attainers make at least the expected progress in the subject
- refining teachers' effectiveness in questioning and leading discussion, by seeking the most effective balance between teacher-talk and opportunities for pupils to develop and express their own ideas independently.

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

Susan Bowles
Her Majesty's Inspector