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Mrs J Addison  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Addison

### **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 31 January and 1 February 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of nine lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

### **Achievement in English**

Achievement in English is good.

- In the last three years, attainment has risen rapidly from well below to above average at GCSE. In 2011, students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, made faster progress than was made nationally. Girls made good progress, while boys, and those eligible for free school meals, made average progress. Rates of progress have accelerated rapidly. In 2011, Year 9 students made significantly improved progress against external benchmarks, especially boys.
- Students with particular special educational needs and/or disabilities spoke eloquently about the good progress made in improving their reading and writing and the excellent support from teaching and support staff. Students who enter school with low levels of literacy make good progress

as a result of outstanding teaching by primary-trained staff in dedicated groups in Years 7 and 8.

- Achievement is satisfactory in the sixth form. In 2010, students made satisfactory progress in the English Literature and Language courses. In 2011, students made weaker progress and achievement was inconsistent across different courses.

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

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- The majority of teaching is good or better. Purposeful lessons communicate high expectations and the enthusiasm and commitment of staff. Consistently good planning, with a well-designed sequence of learning activities, leads to good progress across all year groups. Teachers usually use questioning well to extend and deepen understanding of language and literature. Collaborative planning with support staff effectively meets the needs of individuals and small groups. Some groups of students have not yet developed sufficient confidence in working independently.
- Where observed teaching was satisfactory, tasks were carried out and completed but students did not have sufficient opportunities to develop their personal response. Questioning was not reflective enough and did not sufficiently explore students' understanding.
- Assessment criteria are used well to enable students to understand how well they are doing. Good use of peer- and self-assessment enables students to learn from each other as well as the teacher. Marking is constructive but could be tighter in consistently specifying strengths and areas for improvement. Finely tuned assessment in the literacy lessons is used very effectively to meet individual needs.
- In the sixth form, good teaching in lessons observed met the needs of different levels of ability. Structured dialogue and peer-assessment were used well to improve students' analysis of a poem. At times, there was too much giving of information and not enough evaluation of the historical context of the English language.

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

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- The curriculum provides well for the range of needs and promotes progression through the key stages. Teaching focuses sharply on students' needs. Assessment is used well to re-arrange teaching groups in Year 11 and maximise achievement. Good opportunities to study the media at Key Stage 3 contribute to the popularity of media options at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Role play and drama techniques are used well to explore and develop responses to literature. Students enjoy the opportunities for creative and independent work although this aspect is underdeveloped.

- Good links with primary schools help teachers to build promptly on the learning in Year 6. The curriculum for the weakest students at Key Stage 3 is imaginative, well organised and successful. Proactive and flexible interventions enable individuals to overcome identified obstacles to their progress. This includes gifted and talented students, dyslexic students, school refusers, and students eligible for free school meals.
- Students participate in a creative writing club and a reading group. A Year 7 spelling club successfully targets weaker spellers. Students have regular opportunities to read for pleasure and a good number of sixth form students support weaker readers.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in English is outstanding.

- You and the faculty leader communicate a shared vision and strong commitment. Highly effective action has resulted in rapidly improved achievement. Members of the department contribute actively to strong teamwork on inclusion, professional development and literacy. The training and deployment of support staff successfully meets students' needs. Leaders have an accurate and rigorous analysis of strengths and weaknesses. The identification of staff development needs is used systematically to promote professional development. Performance management and professional development have significantly improved the quality of teaching.

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

- continuing to improve:
  - outcomes in the sixth form
  - the consistency of marking
  - opportunities for creative and independent 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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**Bernard Campbell**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**