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Mr A Joy  
Headteacher  
St Philip's CofE Primary School  
Bloomfield Rise  
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Dear Mr Joy

### **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 24 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, pupils and members of the Governing Body; 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.

- Attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 is broadly average.
- Standards in reading are improving. They are now above average by the end of Key Stage 1 and average at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Many pupils enter the school with weak communication and language skills. These pupils, together with those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who speak English as an additional language, make good progress due to very effective intervention.
- While most pupils make good progress across the school, more able pupils make insufficient progress in writing at Key Stage 2. The school has identified writing as a priority for school improvement. As a result, there is evidence to show that standards in writing are improving and the gap is beginning to close for more able pupils.

## **Quality of teaching in English**

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- The characteristic strengths of teaching include positive relationships and attitudes to learning, well-planned lessons, a variety of engaging tasks, and effective support from teaching assistants. Very effective use is made of a wide range of resources, for instance, pupils use video recorders for film-making and computers for making newspapers. In one class, having been inspired by images of current princes and the fairy tale 'Rapunzel', the pupils wrote a story on the interactive whiteboard using symbols. Consequently, they made rapid progress in understanding the rhythm and language patterns of fairy tales.
- Good use is made of classroom displays, including word banks and a 'reading mountain'. Teaching assistants are especially effective in supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make good progress.
- Additional features in the good and outstanding lessons include high expectations, the use of pupils' targets to match tasks to the range of abilities, and probing questions to extend pupils' understanding. In a minority of lessons, pupils work at the same pace on the same task. Teachers make insufficient use of pupils' targets and assessment to match tasks and questions to the range of abilities. This does not challenge more able pupils in particular.
- Pupils enjoy their English lessons, particularly when they are linked to topics in history. They enjoy especially the many opportunities they are given to apply independent learning skills as in role play, research and discussion.
- Pupils know their targets and what to do to improve their work because of the comments teachers write when marking their books. The specific and detailed comments in Year 6 especially help to promote pupils' rapid improvement in this year group.

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

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It includes media technology, role play and phonics. It includes also a daily reading session in which pupils and staff recommend books to each other. Pupils choose from a range of books that are organised according to increasing challenge. As a result, they read widely and talk eagerly about favourite authors and books.
- The curriculum has been reviewed creatively to provide pupils with a wide range of experiences to talk and write about. For example, pupils spoke eagerly about their film making and their presentation to the Tourist Information Board.
- Extensive and varied enrichment activities enhance pupils' work in English very effectively. Activities include visiting authors and theatre groups, as

well as parents talking about the importance of literacy skills in their professions.

- A particular strength of the school is its work in inclusion. It draws on an extensive range of intervention strategies to meet the specific needs of each pupil with particular needs. The impact of intervention is monitored closely and reviewed regularly.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in English is good.

- The subject leader has secured a consistently good approach to teaching and learning in Key Stage 1. Her leadership engages teachers across the school in sharing good practice. Consequently, English is improving, although the quality of teaching is not yet consistent in all year groups.
- Given the track record of improvements, and the examples of innovative practice in the school, the capacity for further improvement is good.
- Self-evaluation, through analysis of progress data, lessons, pupils' work and teachers' planning, is accurate and informs relevant priorities for improvement.

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

- raising the achievement of more able pupils in writing at Key Stage 2
- increasing the proportion of good and outstanding teaching in English by:
  - ensuring that all teachers use challenging targets and assessment to match tasks and questions to the range of abilities, particularly for more able pupils
  - disseminating the features of good and outstanding lessons.

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

**Sue Frater**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**