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20 February 2012

Mrs J Ingham
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Ingham

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

The overall effectiveness of English is outstanding.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- Pupils make good progress in communication because of the school's highly effective provision for their often very significant needs.
- Although only some pupils are able to read independently, many pupils come to understand signs, symbols and cues. They show keen interest in stories because teachers skilfully adapt texts to suit them. Their attitude to learning is very positive. As one said after practising some new letters and sounds: 'that was harder; I like it'.
- Pupils reflect well before expressing their choices or reactions, using the methods of communication which suit them best. For some, this includes clear speech or writing. Most communicate carefully, taking account of the listeners.

- A high proportion of pupils achieve or exceed their challenging individual targets for reading, writing and, to a better degree, speaking and listening. The school's rigorous assessments show that all groups of pupils have sustained good progress over the past three years.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is outstanding.

- Teaching consistently demonstrates the school's high expectations for enabling pupils to communicate as independently and extensively as possible. Adults consider their own use of language very carefully. They give pupils time to think and express their views in a range of contexts. This underlies pupils' strong progress in social and more formal talk.
- There are highly imaginative examples of the use of modern technology and a wide range of props and sensory experience to enable pupils to participate in story telling and role play. These very evidently help pupils understand stories, but there was scope in some lessons to develop these approaches further and so deepen pupils' engagement with texts and use of their phonic skills.
- Teaching is finely matched to individual needs and offers good challenge. Teachers and assistants work as close-knit and proficient teams, highly aware of the next step different pupils need to take and how to enable progress without over-helping. They carefully observe and check understanding so that skills are consolidated thoroughly. Teachers give simple, useful feedback and find ways to involve pupils in thinking about what they have achieved.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- From the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards, pupils have good opportunities to make choices and to communicate their intentions. Intensive group sessions very effectively target particular communication needs by, for example, accustoming older pupils to asking questions, initiating conversations, and responding to each other. When possible, pupils are encouraged to talk and work together. Such carefully planned elements add up to a very effective curriculum for communication.
- The skills of reading and writing are taught in a systematic and personalised way. Skills are practised effectively throughout the day in a variety of contexts. Imaginative approaches make using these skills fun and relevant to the wider world. Recognising the need to consolidate pupils' phonic skills, school leaders are updating the reading scheme.
- Activities are linked to themes, visits and visitors, scientific or artistic projects and shared reading of traditional and contemporary stories, poems and information texts. As well as making extensive use of technology to help pupils communicate, teachers have made some

fascinating multimedia resources which successfully involve pupils in reading. These have good potential to further develop reading skills.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

The effectiveness of leadership and management in English is outstanding.

- The subject leader and senior team share a powerful commitment to enabling every pupil to communicate well. They have very effectively shared high expectations for what pupils can achieve. As a result, provision continues to improve and pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education.
- The significant contribution of leaders and managers to improving the subject is well illustrated by recent developments in speaking and listening. All staff and governors have been involved in reviewing the opportunities that pupils with all kinds of needs have to communicate, and on agreeing a set of 'golden rules' for good communication. Changes are well researched and supported by differentiated training for staff. Joint observations of teaching, involving subject leaders, check how well policies are implemented and coaching is available from good role models.
- As a result, the principles of good communication are well established throughout school. The school has seen improvements in the quality of teaching and in pupils' response. Assessment is being used rigorously to measure the impact on progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- deepening pupils' engagement with stories and other texts by further developing the use of role play, interactive technology and opportunities to practise decoding skills.

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