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Mr C Hilton
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Hilton

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 27 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 parts of seven lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is outstanding.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is outstanding.

- Attainment in English at the end of Key Stage 2 has been consistently above the national average over recent years, although this dipped slightly at the end of 2010/11. However, the school has been rigorous in identifying the areas that needed to improve and has put in place very effective strategies to address relative weaknesses, for example in writing. As a result, inspection evidence confirms that challenging targets have already been exceeded across Key Stage 2.
- In each year group, pupils are making excellent progress, often from above average entry, and there is secure evidence that the percentage of pupils expected to achieve the higher levels at the end of Year 6 is significantly above average. More able pupils are particularly well challenged with some gifted pupils being appropriately entered for the

Level 6 tests. Standards in handwriting are good, but effective strategies to improve this further are new and have not yet had sufficient impact.

- In Key Stage 1, attainment has been consistently and significantly above average in both reading and writing over recent years. Since pupils enter Key Stage 1 with skills that are at or slightly above average, this represents outstanding progress. Excellent teaching, which is accurately informed by rigorous assessment, is maintaining this exceptionally high standard of achievement.
- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills in communications, language and literacy below that expected for their age. They make excellent progress and most achieve expected levels by the time they transfer to Key Stage 1.
- Groups of pupils, such as those with disabilities and special educational needs and those from the Traveller community, make excellent progress, relative to their starting points. This is because the school has a clear commitment and common approach to ensuring that intervention and support strategies are of the highest quality. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards English.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is outstanding.

- All observed teaching was at least good and much was outstanding, and this reflects the school's own monitoring of teaching. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils' behaviour and standards of work. They have excellent subject knowledge, and use information and communication technology (ICT) very well to support teaching and learning. Imaginative and often inspirational teaching motivates pupils extremely well. For example, in one lesson pupils were writing imaginative sentences to a very high standard after exploring a 'real' treasure chest.
- Very effective and flexible planning ensures that the structure of lessons maintains a brisk pace and that the ongoing needs of pupils are accurately met. Teaching places a strong emphasis on speaking and listening and talk partners are effectively used to explore and develop ideas. The teaching of phonics is particularly effective in supporting pupils' early reading and writing. Teaching assistants are well trained and provide high-quality support for learning both in class and through intervention work with those pupils who are vulnerable.
- Ongoing assessment techniques, such as probing questioning by teachers, support and extend pupils' learning extremely well. A strength is the high level of understanding that pupils have about their targets and what they need to do to achieve them. This is because targets are regularly referred to, are progressive and written in a language that can be easily understood by pupils. A strong feature across the school is the way in which pupils assess their own and each other's work with accuracy, insight and sensitivity. Marking is consistently good, with comments that are positive, detailed and evaluative.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is outstanding.

- The well-planned curriculum meets pupils' needs extremely well. It is broad, balanced and provides clear progression in reading, writing, speaking and listening. Strategies to raise standards further have been particularly effective, for example a strong focus on sentence structure and spelling has successfully raised standards in writing, especially in Key Stage 2.
- Links to other aspects of the curriculum are very effective and a strong emphasis is placed on using ICT to develop research skills. A focus on poetry and reading for pleasure is successfully encouraging pupils to have very positive attitudes towards reading and many talk enthusiastically about their favourite books and authors. The way in which the curriculum is enriched, for example through drama, visiting authors and pupils' contributions to a range of publications, also contributes to an outstanding curriculum provision.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

The effectiveness of leadership and management in English is outstanding.

- Highly effective leadership at all levels is driving improvements in all aspects of English and ensuring an excellent capacity to maintain such high standards in the future. Teachers and support staff are well trained and work cooperatively to share good practice. A strength is the school's commitment to involve parents in supporting their child's learning through, for example, regular feedback on achievement and the provision of workshops on such aspects as accelerated reading. Assessment and monitoring systems, including pupil progress meetings, are used very effectively to monitor pupils' progress, hold teachers to account, inform improvement plans and identify challenging, but achievable targets.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- embedding newly introduced strategies to raise standards in handwriting.

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

Chris Nye
Her Majesty's Inspector