

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr M Wisbach
Headteacher
Charlton-on-Otmoor CE Primary School
Fencott Road
Kidlington
OX5 2UT

Dear Mr Wisbach

Ofsted 2012–13 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 30 April 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 good.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- Attainment in English at the end of Key Stage 2 has been consistently above average during recent years, although in 2011 the percentage of Year 6 pupils achieving the higher levels in writing was slightly below average. Attainment in both reading and writing has improved even more and the current Year 6 is on track to attain standards that are well above the national average, with over half expected to attain the higher level.
- Pupils make good progress overall, although some variation exists between year groups in Key Stage 2. Achievement in reading, speaking and listening are particular strengths because of the strong focus placed upon these areas of the pupils' learning and development. However, although standards in writing are good, the use of pens is not sufficiently encouraged, so standards of written presentation are comparatively weak.

- In Key Stage 1, attainment in both reading and writing has been well above average in the past, but in the current Year 2 overall attainment is expected to dip below this level because of the comparatively high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to the proportion of higher achieving pupils.
- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills in communications, language and literacy that vary from year to year, but overall are in line with national expectations. They make good progress and most leave with skills above that found both locally and nationally.
- Groups of pupils such as pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress, relative to their starting points, and the school has been successful in narrowing achievement gaps, for example between boys and girls. As a result, no specific group in the school is currently underachieving.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Teachers have high expectations of their pupils' behaviour and standards of work. They have good subject knowledge and teaching is very well planned to take full account of the wide ability range in each class. Good use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) to support teaching. Teaching assistants are a strength across the school because they provide consistently good support to pupils with a wide range of learning needs.
- Teachers use ongoing assessment techniques, such as well-targeted questioning, to ensure that the pace of learning is maintained in lessons, and are flexible in adjusting planning where necessary. As a result, pupils enjoy their work, behave exceptionally well and make good progress.
- The teaching of phonics is well established and supports pupils' early reading and writing effectively. Accurate assessment and tracking systems are used to monitor pupils' progress and inform planning. This enables challenging individual targets to be set and pupils have a good awareness of what these are. Well-established systems help pupils to assess their own work, although the school recognises that this can be further developed. Although pupils' work is regularly and accurately marked, the quality of teachers' written guidance varies. At its best it is evaluative and helpful, but some marking does not provide sufficiently detailed guidance regarding how pupils can further improve their work.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- The curriculum is well planned, relevant to pupils' interests and provides an effective foundation for the provision of English throughout the school. It is broad and balanced, covering the full range of reading, writing, speaking and listening. Strategies to raise standards in writing, for

example by the recent introduction of monthly extended writing tasks, are having a positive impact on the quality of pupils' written work. A strong emphasis is placed on reading, such as by regularly reading to pupils.

- Effective links are made to other aspects of the curriculum, such as ICT and humanities. Pupils' positive attitudes to English are further enhanced by a clear focus on the different purposes and outcomes of all aspects of English, for example through publishing their own poetry anthologies and producing very successful films. The way in which the curriculum is enriched, for example through drama productions and visits by professional storytellers, is a strength. As a result, pupils are verbally articulate, enthusiastic about writing in all its genres and many have a very mature appreciation of a wide range of literature and poetry.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

The effectiveness of leadership and management in English is good.

- Teachers share a common understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in English and, supported by effective leadership, a committed and collegiate approach exists towards driving improvement. Teachers and teaching assistants are well trained and work cooperatively to share good practice. Monitoring and effective assessment systems accurately inform planning and identify challenging individual and whole-school targets, thus ensuring that achievement continues to rise. The school therefore has a good capacity to continue to improve further in English.
- Improvement planning appropriately focuses on weaker areas and identifies suitable tasks to address these. However, success criteria do not always identify with sufficient clarity how progress over a one year cycle can be measured against outcomes for pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that marking provides more consistent guidance on how pupils can improve their work
- tightening improvement planning to ensure that success can be more accurately measured against outcomes for pupils
- raising standards of presentation by encouraging more pupils to use pens.

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