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Mr Stonier
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Stonier

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 9 May 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 satisfactory.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is satisfactory.

- Attainment in English is below average at the end of Key Stage 2. Standards in reading are broadly average although fewer pupils than nationally achieve the higher level 5. Attainment in writing is weaker although there is some evidence of a current improvement in standards.
- The 2011 test results suggested that the small number of pupils considered to be eligible for free school meals had underachieved. There was also a significant gender gap in English. Current school assessments suggest that both these gaps are likely to close this year and that attainment in English will rise overall.
- Children arrive in the Early Years Foundation Stage with literacy skills that are below, and sometimes well below, national expectations. Given these starting points, progress overall in English is satisfactory.

- Current learning and progress are satisfactory overall, with good progress in some classes. Pupils enjoy English and try hard. Behaviour is good.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is satisfactory.

- Strengths include: secure relationships; clear and helpful learning objectives; some effective planning for differentiation; good support for writing in the most effective lessons; and a good quality learning environment which supports pupils' learning in English well.
- Plenaries observed were not always wholly effective as teachers sometimes relied too much on peer-assessment when other, more fruitful possibilities were available. There were also occasional missed opportunities to use teachers' modelling of writing more effectively.
- There has been considerable, recent emphasis on marking and improving feedback to pupils. Pupils are aware of their targets in writing and usually understand them well. Books are marked regularly and in detail, including for younger pupils. At times, more able pupils are not always given enough guidance on their next steps and areas for improvement are rarely linked to the curricular targets set previously for pupils.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is satisfactory.

- The school has revised the English curriculum to meet pupils' needs and interests. This has been successful and contributes to positive attitudes in lessons. Some innovative units have been designed and pupils are more involved in providing feedback on the curriculum. The curriculum has been broadened, for example, through the imaginative use of a range of information and communication technology resources in English.
- There has been a real emphasis on the writing curriculum and most pupils now enjoy writing. Current initiatives include: more opportunities for pupils to write for real purposes and audiences; more emphasis on extended writing; and the stimulus of first-hand experiences and visual resources. Approaches to teaching spelling and grammar lack consistency, however.
- Initiatives in reading include: improvements to resources, with a good range of modern texts and magazines increasingly being used with pupils; the re-introduction of class stories and novels; planned visits to the local public library; and reading events such as Book Week and a Roald Dahl Day.
- Enrichment is currently relatively limited but includes the Magazine Club, occasional visitors such as a theatre group and trips linked to the wider curriculum.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

The effectiveness of leadership and management in English is good.

- The capacity for further improvement is good. This is partly because the subject leader is knowledgeable, enthusiastic and a strong classroom teacher. She is in a good position to move things forward. The senior leaders are well aware of the need to raise standards at the end of Key Stage 2. Action taken to improve the curriculum and standards in writing is already having a positive impact.
- There has been good work to improve marking and increase consistency in assessing pupils' levels through moderation. More effective procedures are in place to monitor progress, including of different groups of pupils.
- The school uses a good range of monitoring activities. This enables it to form a realistic view about current achievement and to identify the most pressing priorities. However, the detailed evidence from monitoring is not yet used effectively enough to develop sharply focused subject action plans or to provide sufficient guidance for staff on classroom practice.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving achievement in English, especially writing by:
 - developing a more systematic approach across the school to spelling and grammar
 - providing clearer guidance to staff through a focused subject action plan and/or guidance on classroom practice
 - focusing comments in marking more directly on pupils' targets for improvement, where appropriate
 - making more effective use of the subject leader to enhance the quality of English teaching across all classes.

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

Philip Jarrett
Her Majesty's Inspector