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Mr J James
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mr James

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 Tuesday 29 January 2013 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; a learning walk and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has been variable in the past, but a strong focus on English in the last two years has resulted in a steady improvement in pupils' achievement. Last summer, the percentage of Year 6 pupils attaining the expected levels in reading was better than average and in writing this was close to the national average. Since their attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 was significantly below average, this represents good progress in both reading and writing. Inspection evidence confirms the school's view that this positive picture has been further built upon this year throughout the key stage, although the school recognises that more needs to be done to raise standards in handwriting.
- In Key Stage 1 attainment had been static at just below average in reading and writing for a number of years. However, a strong focus on accelerating pupils' progress in reading and writing has started to show a significant improvement in pupils' attainment. Last summer's Year 1 screening in phonics (linking letters with the sounds that they make)

showed that pupils were doing considerably better than average and an above average percentage of pupils in Year 2 is on track to meet or exceed the expected levels in reading and writing.

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills in communication and language and literacy well below those expected for their age. They consistently make good progress and the very large majority attain the expected levels by the time they transfer to Key Stage 1, although some find it a struggle to form letters correctly.
- Groups of pupils - such as those with special educational needs, those who qualify for additional government funding (known as 'Pupil Premium') and those who speak English as an additional language - make good progress in reading and writing. This is because the school trains teachers and teaching assistants well, especially in phonics, and provides effective early interventions to support such pupils.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Lessons are well planned to take good account of pupils' prior learning and meet the wide range of needs and abilities in each class. Teachers have good subject knowledge and make good use of a range of resources, such as information and communication technology, to support their teaching. Imaginative and sometimes inspirational teaching motivates pupils well and ensures a brisk pace to lessons. For example, in one lesson pupils were enthusiastically designing information books to support the learning of children in the Reception class. On-going assessment techniques, such as probing questioning by teachers, support and extend pupils' learning well.
- Pupils are enthusiastic readers because they are encouraged to read widely. The quality of their writing has improved considerably as a result of a much greater emphasis being placed on writing for a range of purposes in all the subjects that are taught. Spelling and grammar are rapidly improving across the school but, although the presentation of pupils' work has improved, the lack of a consistent approach to handwriting and the under-use of pens in Key Stage 2 have meant that this is not yet of a high enough standard.
- The teaching of phonics is well established and effectively supports pupils' early reading and writing. As a result, reading is a strength and writing is rapidly improving. However, occasionally errors that younger pupils make in the formation of letters of the alphabet go unnoticed.
- Marking is consistently good, with comments that are positive, detailed and evaluative. Pupils are aware of their targets and routinely assess their own progress against achieving these, so have a good understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- The well-planned curriculum provides an effective foundation for the provision of English throughout the school. It is broad and balanced, receptive to the needs of pupils and covers the full range of reading, writing, speaking and listening. Strategies to help raise standards are effective, for example, in preparing pupils for the newly introduced grammar test in Year 6. A strength is the way in which links are made to other subjects, often through the use of classic texts. For example, a key text in a history topic on the Victorians is 'A Christmas Carol' by Charles Dickens.
- The curriculum is very effectively enriched through theatre trips, visits by drama groups and a range of clubs, including an animation club. A strong tradition of the pupils performing plays, including 'Macbeth' by William Shakespeare, enhances their love of English.

Effectiveness of leadership in and management of English

The effectiveness of leadership in and management of English is good.

- Effective leadership is having a positive impact on accelerating improvements in pupils' achievement. This is because leaders are passionate about driving improvement. They make good use of accurate assessment and detailed monitoring data to set targets for improving the quality of teaching and raising pupils' achievement. There is clear evidence that standards are improving across the school and there is a good capacity to build on this in the future.
- Improvement planning is of good quality because it clearly identifies areas that need to improve, plans suitable actions and timescales and provides very clear criteria against which success can be measured.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing a common approach to the teaching of handwriting
- ensuring that errors in letter formation are consistently corrected
- ensuring that pens are used more routinely by pupils, especially in Key Stage 2.

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