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Mrs M Tunncliffe  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Tunncliffe

### **Ofsted 2013 subject survey inspection programme: English**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 4 and 5 February 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

### **Achievement in English**

Achievement in English is good.

- Students enter the school in Year 9 with attainment close to the national average. Although there was a dip in 2012, students usually attain above average standards in English at the end of Year 11. Results in controlled assessments and work in students' folders confirm that students are now achieving well and attainment is rising.
- All groups make good progress. The school supports students at risk of underachievement well, through help with reading, small group teaching and in-class support. Students eligible for free school meals achieve higher than similar students nationally.

- In recent years the numbers taking English Literature and English Language and Literature at A-level have been relatively small. These students have attained broadly average standards, but relatively few have achieved the higher levels.
- Increased challenge and expectation for students joining the school have led to higher attainment by the end of Year 9. A greater proportion of these students now achieve above-expected standards.
- The keenest students talk enthusiastically about how teaching has inspired them to enjoy an extended range of literature, but not all share this enthusiasm for reading widely. Limited experience of good writing across genres and from different contexts weakens sixth formers' response to texts.

### **Quality of teaching in English**

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- The best lessons evoke a personal response from the students to the story, poem or image being considered. For example, a Year 10 lesson on a poem by Wilfred Owen began with a hymn that Owen would have known, striking images from the trenches and time for the students to read the poem through and reflect on its power. This resulted in high-quality work when the students used their critical skills to study the poem.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and manage students' behaviour well. They provide opportunities for students to share ideas and discuss one another's work. Lessons are carefully planned and well organised. Students confirm that there is good quality teaching throughout the department.
- Teachers mark work carefully. Students value the constructive feedback and say that comments help them identify how they can improve. Students in Year 9 benefit from assessments which highlight next steps in learning and direct them to online activities they can access at home. This system is accelerating their progress.
- In a small minority of lessons teachers do not use what they know about their students' ability and interests to set work that motivates them and leads to good progress.

### **Quality of the curriculum in English**

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- Schemes of work give good attention to developing students' skills in spoken and written language and include drama, poetry, fiction and non-fiction and a range of media. The school provides a variety of effective interventions for both higher and lower attainers.

- Writing competitions, a school newspaper and links with the local community complement the mainstream curriculum. However, when students are asked about their wider experiences associated with English their responses are limited.
- Literacy skills are promoted well in other subjects. Teachers and classroom displays highlight the importance of these skills. Work in students' science and geography books shows that students recognise the importance of clearly written findings and well-explained opinions.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management in English**

The effectiveness of leadership and management in English is good

- The school's leaders have high expectations and acted quickly to ensure that factors leading to a dip in attainment in 2012 were resolved.
- The newly-appointed subject leader has an accurate grasp of strengths and areas for development in the department and is already having a positive impact on teaching and learning. Teachers share best practice and make good use of well-directed opportunities to extend their knowledge and skills.
- Students' progress is monitored regularly, with careful checks made to ensure that assessments are accurate. Since federation with two middle schools, school leaders have improved transition to the high school. This is leading to higher attainment at the end of Year 9.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- developing a strong enrichment programme to support higher achievement and a greater passion for English
- increasing the numbers of students studying English in sixth form and raising attainment at A-level.

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.

Yours sincerely

**Anthony O'Malley**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**