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Mr M Wood  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Wood

### **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 6 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 the headteacher and acting deputy headteacher; pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and joint observation of two sessions of letters and sounds and three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English requires improvement.

#### **Achievement in English**

Achievement in English requires improvement.

- Pupils enter Reception with an average level of development expected for their age in communication, language and literacy. They make sound progress and by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage attainment in communication language and literacy is average.
- At Key Stage 1, attainment is average. In June 2012, the results in the national check on pupils' knowledge of letters and sounds were low. As a result of prompt remedial action, an average proportion of pupils reached the required standard by December 2012. In 2012, fewer pupils than average met the expected level of 2b or above in reading and writing, and pupils achieved less well in English than mathematics. However, more pupils than average gained the higher level 3.

- At Key Stage 2, overall attainment is average. A higher proportion than average gained level 5 in 2012. However, lower ability pupils did not make enough progress. In 2012, overall progress was a little above average in reading and average in writing. School data show that pupils are making expected progress in most year groups. Current progress is slower in writing than in reading at both key stages.
- Pupils are co-operative and are keen to read, write and talk. Most enjoy their English lessons. Some of the more able pupils need more challenge.

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

The quality of teaching in English requires improvement.

- As a result of better teaching of letters and sounds, pupils are learning more successfully. Sessions are organised and planned to match pupils' levels and tasks actively involve pupils. In observed sessions, teaching did not focus enough on introducing and practising new letters and sounds. Too much time was given to distinguishing between real and artificial words. On occasion, staff take insufficient care to write letters at the correct size or to ensure all pupils can see the words on the board.
- The majority of observed teaching required improvement. Some was outstanding. In the best teaching, activities are sharply focused and expertly sequenced, with the result that pupils methodically develop their skills in using words and sentences. Imaginative visual resources and well prepared tasks stimulate pupils' response to a text and inspire their writing. In teaching requiring improvement, relationships are good and learning is active but planning lacks rigour. The skills to be learnt are not defined sufficiently precisely and tasks do not consistently and logically develop the skills of pupils at different levels of ability.
- Some marking gives specific praise and clear guidance. Some is too general. Too often, marking simply praises the use of vocabulary and asks for improvement in punctuation. The recent introduction of coloured marking has begun to highlight what has been achieved and what to do to improve. Marking does not refer specifically enough to the skills that have been demonstrated or identify the next steps with sufficient precision.

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

The quality of the curriculum in English requires improvement.

- The curriculum for teaching letters and sounds has improved. The time allocated, and the frequency of sessions, are now appropriate. Pupils are well organised into groups according to their stage of development. Better trained staff are following a common scheme for the teaching of letters and sounds.
- The English curriculum provides an appropriate breadth and balance, including poetry, drama and the media. Reading for pleasure is formally supported through reading records and reviews up to Year 4. Pupils are

encouraged to read more widely in Years 5 and 6 but there is no formal system for checking or rewarding reading for pleasure. The planning of guided reading does not follow a common approach. Units of work are not presented to a consistent format and vary in the level of attention and detail to text, sentence and word work, and the provision for different ages and levels.

- In the current school year, additional activities have been provided to support underachieving pupils at all levels of ability. Activities to improve these pupils' reading, writing and talk are specified clearly but their impact has not yet been formally evaluated. Pupils attend a popular film club, where they make animations, and a reading club. More able pupils attend a writing club. Younger pupils are introduced to the local library and sessions are held for parents to help their children read and spell.

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

The effectiveness of leadership in and management of English requires improvement.

- The leadership and teaching of English have been affected by the high proportion of staff on maternity leave.
- Effective action has been taken to redress the weakness in the teaching of letters and sounds and to improve the timetable, the grouping of pupils and the training of teaching and support staff. Senior leaders have an accurate view of where the weaknesses in achievement lie and have made appropriate plans to tackle them. The evaluation of teaching correctly identifies strengths but does not identify weaknesses sharply enough. Leaders do not provide clear enough expectations for the planning of good teaching and units of work. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment of skills in English lacks consistency.

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

- improving the quality and consistency of teaching and the curriculum, with a more detailed focus on the learning and assessment of skills
- increasing progress and attainment, especially in writing, and ensuring that most Year 1 pupils know their letters and sounds at the next test.

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

**Bernard Campbell**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**