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Mr J Hughes
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Dear Mr Hughes

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 21 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 pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; a learning walk and observation of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

Achievement in English is good.

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills in communication, language and literacy on or slightly below those expected for their age. They make good progress in their reading, writing, speaking and listening and most meet or exceed expected levels by the time they transfer to Key Stage 1. The current cohort is making particularly good progress and a higher-than-average percentage is on track to exceed expected levels.
- This good start is built upon in Key Stage 1. Although attainment at the end of Year 2 in reading and writing has been around average in the past, this has improved more recently. Pupils in Year 2 last year attained above the national average, and attainment is set to improve still further at the end of this year. The result of last year's phonics screening (linking letters with the sounds that they make) was above the national average with girls doing particularly well.

- At the end of last academic year, attainment in reading and writing at the end of Key Stage 2 was showing a steadily improving trend from below average to around average, although in national tests the percentage attaining the higher levels in reading and writing was well below that found in other schools. Since then, the school has put in place a number of effective strategies to raise standards and accelerate progress in reading and writing. Inspection evidence confirms the school's own data, which indicate that the current Year 6 are on track to exceed expected levels and for the percentage achieving the higher levels to be above the national average. This positive picture is reflected throughout the key stage. Pupils' achievement in speaking and listening is good and standards of handwriting and presentation are high.
- Groups of pupils - such as those with special educational needs and those who qualify for additional government funding (known as 'Pupil Premium') - make good progress in reading and writing. Although the school recognises the need to review its intervention provision, effective support, such as their 'Early Morning Reader' scheme, is helping such pupils to make faster progress.

Teaching in English is good.

- Teaching is good overall and some is outstanding. Teachers and teaching assistants have good subject knowledge, especially in phonics, and make very good use of a wide range of resources to support teaching. The use made of information and communication technology in lessons is a particular strength. Lessons are well structured and carefully planned to take account of previous learning and pupils' different abilities. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations and model reading, writing, speaking and listening skills well. Effective questioning is used to assess pupils' learning and identify misconceptions. However, in a minority of lessons the pace of learning is too slow, because some pupils are less attentive or are not fully engaged in their learning.
- Teachers' marking is consistently good. Very clear links are made to national curriculum levels and pupils have a secure understanding of what they need to do to reach the next level. A strength is the way in which pupils are encouraged to assess their own and others' work against clear success criteria, which encourages them to take responsibility for their own learning.

The curriculum in English is outstanding.

- The curriculum is outstanding because it has been carefully designed to provide a distinctive and creative response to the needs of pupils, whose views are regularly sought. It imaginatively adapts national initiatives and ensures an excellent balance between reading, writing, speaking and listening. The curriculum is kept under constant review and provides an exceptionally rich and varied programme which fires pupils' enthusiasm through initiatives such as 'extreme reading' and a topic structure which starts each topic with a question and a 'wow' event.

- There is a strong focus on developing literacy skills in all other subjects. Texts are very effectively used to inspire positive attitudes towards reading and writing, which is raising standards of writing, especially for the higher ability pupils. For example, the pupils who met with the inspector demonstrated great enthusiasm for the weekly 'free-write' and 'writing adventure days'.
- Programmes in phonics and early reading have been particularly successful. A very well-resourced and organised library encourages independent reading and literacy skills are systematically developed. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic and confident, developing a love of poetry, literature and writing, which is reflected in their improving standards of achievement. This rich curriculum is further enhanced by a range of trips, visits and activities such as 'word treasure hunts'. Links are made to music and drama and pupils regularly visit the theatre.

Leadership and management of English are good.

- Passionate leadership is effectively driving improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement. Leaders make good use of accurate assessment and detailed monitoring data to set targets and measure the impact of training. For example, recent monitoring identified the need to raise teacher expectations about the quality of pupils' writing. Well-directed training followed and there is clear evidence that standards of pupils' writing are improving across the school. Consequently, there is a good capacity to improve in the future.
- Improvement planning identifies appropriate actions to address weaknesses. However, it is not always made clear how success will be measured against outcomes for pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that recent improvements in reading and writing, especially in Key Stage 2, are embedded so that achievement continues to improve by:
 - ensuring that the pace of pupils' learning is as good as in the best lessons
 - further strengthening intervention strategies
- tightening improvement plans so that success criteria are clearly measureable against pupils' outcomes.

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

Chris Nye
Her Majesty's Inspector