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Mrs R Swailes
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Dear Mrs Swailes

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 28 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; and observation of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English requires improvement.

Achievement in English requires improvement.

- Pupils enter the Early Years Foundation Stage well below the expected levels of development in communication, language and literacy, especially the boys. Pupils make good progress and by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage their attainment is below average but no longer well below.
- At Key Stage 1, pupils make good progress in reading and writing. In 2012, more pupils than average met the required standard in the national check on pupils' knowledge of letters and sounds. Attainment is average in reading and writing at the end of Key Stage 1. Boys' attainment remains lower than the girls'.
- Attainment is average at the end of Key Stage 2. Boys make less progress and their attainment is lower than for girls. This gap narrowed in 2012. The progress pupils make in different year groups at Key Stage 2 is

inconsistent. Pupils make slower progress in writing than reading. School assessments indicate that rates of progress have improved in the current year, except where a class has been affected by staff absence.

- In the early years and Key Stage 1, boys and girls engage purposefully in stimulating and well-planned activities which enable them to systematically develop their skills in speaking and listening and in literacy. At Key Stage 2, pupils enjoy the variety of lesson activities and respond well to accurate marking and guidance on how to improve.

Teaching in English requires improvement.

- The quality of teaching at Key Stage 2 has been affected by some instability of staffing. On occasion, lessons lack sharp focus because objectives are too general or too many aspects of language are being covered at the same time. The teaching of specific skills and features of writing is not always precise enough.
- The good features of teaching at Key Stage 2 include the imaginative use of learning resources, including video clips of poems and digital recordings of pupils' comments. Activities are interesting and varied and provide good opportunities for speaking and listening. At both key stages, marking is generally good. Pupils are given clear feedback about what they have done well and how to improve.
- In the early years and Key Stage 1, expertly presented teaching of letters and sounds enables pupils to learn and apply their knowledge effectively. Well-planned activities enable pupils to hear and pronounce letters and sounds, accurately form words, and link the written word to its meaning. Resources are used imaginatively, indoors and outdoors, to focus language learning and promote pupils' skills in speaking and listening. Teachers use examples of writing well to demonstrate how pupils should use particular grammatical features.

The curriculum in English is good.

- The high priority given to developing speaking and listening skills, especially in the early years, is successful in meeting the needs of pupils. Staff use assessment precisely to identify activities which improve pupils' oral skills and confidence in English. Language development activities are successful in engaging boys because they are practical and designed to meet their interests. The regular use of real life experiences, visits and visual images are used effectively to engage pupils in talking, reading and writing.
- The teaching of letters and sounds is well structured and planned. Good support is provided for reading in the refurbished library. The programme of shared and guided reading enables pupils to develop their skills in

reading and their response to texts. Pupils are successfully encouraged to read at home. The recent 'Story Sack' project was successful in training and supporting parents in reading with their children at home. The school has recruited a large number of adult volunteers who regularly come in to school to hear pupils read, which pupils value. Pupils have good opportunities to meet and work with writers. They regularly take part in popular drama productions.

Leadership and management of English are good.

- Leaders communicate a strong vision and commitment to meeting pupils' needs and raising their achievement. Clear direction, detailed assessments of need and firm actions have ensured that pupils make good progress in the early years and at Key Stage 1. Leaders are outward-looking and have brought in imaginative strategies and resources to develop pupils' communication and literacy skills.
- The quality of teaching and pupils' work are checked closely and evaluated accurately. The progress of pupils is regularly reviewed and actions put in place to tackle underachievement. Prompt action has been taken to tackle weakness in teaching. Effective training of teaching assistants has increased the effectiveness of their role in teaching and assessing pupils' progress. Staff have good opportunities to learn from each other through discussion and regular lesson observation. Progress is improving but not enough pupils at Key Stage 2 make good progress, especially the boys.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- at Key Stage 2: improving the consistency of teaching across year groups; and making sure that the teaching of writing focuses precisely on specific skills and features of English, so that pupils make good progress, especially the boys.

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

Bernard Campbell
Her Majesty's Inspector