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Mr D Clark
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Dear Mr Clark

Ofsted 2013–14 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 16 April 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; observation of five lessons and visits to sessions teaching letters and sounds.

The overall effectiveness of English is outstanding.

Achievement in English is outstanding.

- Pupils enter nursery below age-related expectations. They make good progress in developing their communication, language and literacy skills and by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage attainment is average.
- In 2012, fewer than average Year 1 pupils met the national standard for their knowledge of letters and sounds. This year the teaching of letters and sounds has improved and pupils have made better progress. Overall, pupils make good progress at Key Stage 1. Attainment in reading and writing has improved year-on-year and was above average in 2012.
- At Key Stage 2, attainment is above average in reading and writing. Pupils of all abilities make outstanding progress at Key Stage 2 and achievement has been exceptionally high for several years. Extra help enables individuals with particular needs to make good progress.

- Pupils are excited by their English lessons. They take great pride in learning in their topic-based English work. They are inspired by the enthusiastic teaching and imaginative ways of learning.

Teaching in English is outstanding.

- The best teaching makes excellent use of the topic to stimulate interest, increase knowledge and take pupils imaginatively into other times and places. For example, Year 6 pupils enjoyed the challenge of developing their skills in using subordinate clauses by explaining events in the Anglo-Zulu Wars. Year 3 pupils deepened their appreciation of 1950s music by examining a news report of Buddy Holly's death and comparing it with the lyrics of 'American Pie'. Teaching provides careful modelling of what pupils are expected to write, which enables them to tackle tasks with confidence. Staff provide well-focused additional support for different language needs and for individual pupils who are falling behind. On occasion, grammar work is too mechanical.
- The teaching of letters and sounds has improved this year as a result of targeting teaching more accurately to the needs of different groups. Observed good teaching involved individual pupils actively responding to letters and sounds.
- Visually stimulating learning resources, on paper and on screen, contribute to pupils' high levels of motivation and they influence the quality of pupils' written work. Clear and well-presented guidance on targets, skills and key words supports and directs learning well. Classroom displays make excellent use of mannequins to bring topic learning to life. Imaginative displays celebrate different types of writing by pupils in all years.
- The progress of pupils is very well evidenced in the book of each pupil's assessed work. Half-termly assessments systematically document pupils' achievement in different types of writing from Years 1 to 6. Learning journals in the Early Years Foundation Stage also provide an excellent record of pupils' progress. Marking is personal and specific and provides constructive praise and guidance on how to improve.

The curriculum in English is outstanding.

- The curriculum provides memorable experiences. Pupils talked enthusiastically about the impact of historical and geographical topics in English, including the vocabulary they had learnt and writing they had done. For example, pupils discovered a confederate soldier under a tree and discussion led to high quality and well-informed writing about the American Civil War. Well-planned topic work provides pupils with a strong knowledge base which is used to develop and organise their writing and give it meaning.
- The curriculum provides a rigorous framework of skills to be taught and assessed at text, sentence and word level. The types of reading and writing are clearly and comprehensively mapped for each topic and each half term in all years. Clear guidance is provided on questions to develop pupils' skills in reading comprehension. Extended writing is built in to

weekly plans. The approach to correcting spelling is systematic. Guidance on handwriting is effective. The teaching of letters and sounds improved as a result of grouping pupils by ability and increasing the use of trained teaching assistants. The introduction of a new scheme is planned.

- Rewards for reading and writing, including poetry, motivate pupils. Half termly topic presentations by classes are scripted and acted in full costume. Many visits and visitors widen pupils' experience, including theatre visits, a puppet theatre, Bible story tellers and an annual book fair.

Leadership and management of English are outstanding.

- Leaders' vision of English within a topic-based curriculum provides a coherent and inspiring framework for teaching and learning. The expert subject leader provides strong direction about the skills to be learnt and assessed and how to teach them. Expectations of pupils and staff are high.
- Rigorous planning has led to strong consistency in the approaches to reading, writing, spelling and handwriting. Assessment is frequent and excellently documented. Staff are encouraged to be imaginative and enhance the English curriculum by using their own skills and interests, for example in history, art and music. The needs of pupils needing extra help are identified well and met with great care. The evaluation of teaching and of pupils' work is detailed and reflective and clearly highlights where things can be improved. Professional development is accurately focused on identified needs.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- further improving the teaching of letters and sounds.

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