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Mrs L Bolton
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Bolton

Ofsted 2013-14 best practice study: Journey to excellence in English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 18 April 2013 to look at work in English.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our publication about best practice in English. The publication will include case studies about individual providers. If your school is included as a case study, you will have an opportunity to comment prior to publication. Individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence gathered during the visit included: discussions with senior staff, and pupils; the joint observation of two lessons with senior staff and the subsequent feedback to teachers; a brief learning walk; and scrutiny of relevant documentation. This evidence built upon that collected during my English subject survey inspection of your school on 25 February 2013.

Features of good practice observed

- The very strong curriculum underpins outstanding teaching because it is flexible, highly responsive to pupils' needs and is kept under constant review. Detailed 'non-negotiable' aspects of the curriculum and teaching, which teachers have developed in each year group, ensure that there is a strong emphasis on skills' progression. School leaders undertake detailed and continuous reviews of the impact of the curriculum on pupils' learning so that it supports teaching and ensures a high level of sustained pupil engagement.
- Effective strategies to improve pupils' understanding of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) have resulted in the elimination of a

previous achievement gap between boys' and girls' early reading and writing skills.

- The curriculum is exceptionally well enriched through such activities as the frequent visits by writers of children's fiction and by drama and theatre groups. A strength is the entitlement that pupils have to frequently perform in school plays, including musicals and plays by Shakespeare.
- Excellent use is made of technology to enhance pupils' reading, writing, speaking and listening. For example younger pupils' writing and speaking skills were enhanced by the effective use of animation software to enable a hamster to 'speak' on a video, using a script that they had written.
- During the visit, pupils responded extremely well to opportunities for purposeful writing for a specific audience. For example, children in the Reception class were effectively using time connectives to write a list of instructions on how to make a sandwich for Year 6 pupils, who said that they didn't know how to do this!
- A strength in the teaching is teachers' passion for English and the way in which they model speaking and listening, reading and writing. This has had a significant impact on encouraging both boys and girls to engage with their learning, and, as a result, pupils are very enthusiastic readers and writers, producing high quality work.
- Leaders at all levels are highly responsive and work together effectively to drive improvement. For example, the two points for improvement raised in the subject survey visit have been fully and impressively addressed in just two months. As a result, the presentation of pupils' written work has improved and the schools' own assessment of their spelling and grammar skills show that they are attaining very high standard of writing. Pupils' progress throughout the school is excellent. This is illustrated by those pupils currently in Year 6 who, from low starting points, are on track to achieve well above local and national averages in reading and writing. Pupils who are supported by pupil premium and those with special educational needs also make significantly better progress than these groups locally and nationally.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop English in the school.

As I 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

Chris Nye
Her Majesty's Inspector