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Mrs B Porter
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Porter

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 19 June 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 four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English requires improvement

Achievement in English requires improvement

- Pupils get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. This means their reading and writing skills are broadly average by the time they leave Year 2. Pupils' progress slows from this point and they make uneven gains in their learning across Key Stage 2. As a result, English standards fell in 2012 and pupils' achievement was well below the national average.
- School-based data show an improving picture and more pupils are making expected progress. However, not enough pupils are making greater gains in reading and writing across all classes. Pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding do less well than their peers and White British pupils underperform against other minority ethnic groups in the school.
- Pupils enjoy English lessons. They work hard and are keen to do their best. They have positive attitudes to reading, which means they enjoy

reading at home and at school. Pupils' books show spelling and handwriting skills are improving and many pupils use a wide range of vocabulary to make their writing interesting to the reader. Pupils have a good grasp of writing rules, but they are not always able to use their skills to write for purpose and pleasure for sustained periods of time.

Teaching in English requires improvement

- Teachers make the purpose of lessons clear and they plan well-structured sessions to help pupils work on their own. In good or better English lessons, teachers use their expert subject knowledge to question pupils carefully. These teachers constantly check on pupils' progress and intervene swiftly if any pupil is at risk of lagging behind.
- Not all teaching matches the best. Some teachers do not get the most out of everyone because activities are not matched closely to pupils' needs. Time is not used wisely and opportunities to deepen pupils' learning are lost.
- Pupils' work is marked diligently, but not all teachers provide useful comments to help pupils know what they need to do to improve.
- Pupils speak highly about the English teaching they receive. They say teachers are good at explaining new learning and are always willing to help out if pupils are 'fresh out of ideas'.

The curriculum in English requires improvement

- The teaching of reading and writing is underpinned by a published scheme which teachers use well to help pupils gain key skills as they move from class to class. The teaching of early reading is particularly strong, so pupils tackle new words with confidence. They also have ample opportunity to read for meaning across a range of different texts. Although pupils are taught writing skills and techniques, they do not have enough opportunity to practise these skills. This is because the whole-school plan for extended writing lacks detail and not enough guidance is provided to help teachers promote pupils' writing skills in other subjects.
- Teachers are beginning to link subjects together to make learning more interesting. Nonetheless, opportunities for information communication technology (ICT) and multi-media are not always grasped well enough to ensure the English curriculum is creative and purposeful. Increasing opportunities for pupils to meet with authors, stage their own school plays and watch visiting theatre groups are helping to enrich their experiences and link English learning to their everyday life.

Leadership and management of English is good

- The newly appointed subject leader has not had the time or the training to grasp the role fully and drive improvements in English. She is beginning to help teachers refresh their teaching skills by providing whole-school training. However, her role in checking the quality of English teaching is

underdeveloped. Leadership of the structured reading and writing published scheme is stronger. The successful impact of this work is evident in improved standards at the end of Year 2 and pupils' positive attitudes to reading.

- Checks on English teaching do not happen often enough. Although teachers receive feedback on their teaching this often lacks precision and does not always help them to improve their practice. Nonetheless, leaders and managers know the strengths and weaknesses in English across the school. They understand what steps they need to take to improve teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Information on pupils' progress is used well to ensure that any pupils who are falling behind receive extra help. As a result, the school is aware of differences in achievement and is beginning to tackle these gaps with greater vigour.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving pupils' progress in reading and writing, particularly in Key Stage 2, by:
 - ensuring teachers match English activities more closely to pupils' needs
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills across other subjects for sustained periods of time
 - ensuring teachers' marking provides clear guidance so pupils know what they need to do to improve.
- improving the English curriculum by providing greater opportunities for pupils to use ICT and multi-media in their everyday English lessons
- improving leadership and management of English by:
 - providing the subject leader with appropriate time and training to grasp the role and drive English forward
 - ensuring that checks on English teaching happen more frequently and teachers receive clear feedback so that they know how improve.

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

Joanne Olsson
Her Majesty's Inspector