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Miss M Ackland  
Headteacher  
Wickham C of E Primary School  
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Wickham  
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PO17 5HU

Dear Miss Ackland

### **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 17 July 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 six lessons and the work of the reading recovery teacher.

### **The overall effectiveness of English is good.**

#### **Achievement in English is good.**

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills in communication and language and literacy well below those expected for their age. They make better than expected progress, especially in phonics (linking letters to the sounds that they make) and early reading, and the very large majority achieve their early learning goals, with an above average proportion exceeding these.
- This excellent start is built upon in Key Stage 1 and a previous history of underachievement has been successfully overcome. Outcomes of the Year 1 phonics screening were well above the national average last year and these have been improved even further this year.
- In Key Stage 1 pupils make good progress in reading and writing. Recently, attainment has improved significantly and the proportion

attaining the expected levels in reading and writing is now above that found in other schools nationally.

- In Key Stage 2, attainment has also improved significantly and the outcomes of national tests at the end Year 6 have improved from well below average in 2011 in reading and writing to well above average in reading and around average in writing. In most year groups pupils achieve or exceed the expected progress in both reading and writing. The school has recognised where progress in reading has been slower and has put in place strategies to accelerate this. Early indications are that these are having a positive impact. Pupils' achievement in speaking and listening throughout the school is good.
- Although standards of handwriting have improved recently, the quality of presentation of pupils' written work is variable.
- Because the school provides effective early interventions, pupils with special educational needs, those who speak English as an additional language and those who qualify for additional government funding (known as 'Pupil Premium') make good progress, relative to these groups nationally, in reading and writing.

### **Teaching in English is good.**

- Inspection evidence confirms the school's own rigorous monitoring of teaching, which shows a rapidly improving picture in English. Although such improvements are still comparatively recent and the school recognises the need to strengthen teaching further, there is secure evidence that good teaching is being reflected in the good, and sometimes outstanding, progress that pupils are making in English.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have excellent subject knowledge in phonics, and make very good use of resources, including information and communication technology, to support their teaching. Lessons are well structured and carefully planned to take account of previous learning and pupils' different abilities. Teachers and teaching assistants model writing well and imaginative activities ensure that pupils are enthusiastic learners who behave well. For example, in a poetry lesson pupils were enthusiastically sharing very creative five-line poems that they had written about the summer.
- During lessons most teachers make effective use of on-going assessment techniques, such as questioning, although sometimes opportunities are missed to check pupils' understanding thoroughly enough.
- Teachers' marking is of a consistently high standard. Detailed and evaluative comments provide clear guidance to pupils about how to improve their work. Pupils routinely assess their own progress against clear criteria against which their writing is assessed; this encourages them to take responsibility for their own learning.

## **The curriculum in English is good.**

- The well-planned curriculum provides an effective foundation for the provision of English throughout the school. It is broad and balanced, receptive to the needs of pupils and covers the full range of reading, writing, speaking and listening. Detailed plans have been finalised to integrate the new National Curriculum into an already strong curriculum in September.
- The curriculum has many strengths, including plans showing how skills such as phonics are progressively developed, how poetry is taught and the strong emphasis that is placed on purposeful writing. Very effective links are made to other subjects, for example in history through such activities as 'Horrible Histories Week'.
- The curriculum is very effectively enriched through drama, book weeks and visiting children's authors. Very well-planned intervention programmes are successfully accelerating the progress of vulnerable pupils.

## **Leadership and management of English are outstanding.**

- The leadership team has been highly successful. This is because their passionate commitment and excellent use of a wide range of accurate assessment and monitoring data have driven rapid improvements in teaching, which is reflected in a significant improvement in pupils' achievement.
- Almost all of the issues identified in last December's inspection report have been successfully addressed as a result of well-focused professional development and support for teachers. Clear improvement plans identify the few residual weaknesses as priorities, and strategies to resolve these are well-considered. The rate of improvement that the school has achieved in a comparatively short period of time is very impressive.

## **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- embedding recent improvements in teaching to eliminate residual weaknesses, especially in monitoring pupils' progress in lessons
- improving the quality of presentation of pupils' written work.

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

**Chris Nye**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**