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Mr L Crilly
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Crilly

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 14 October 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 the school's most recent achievement data; and observation of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good

Achievement in English is good

- The unvalidated results for Key Stage 2 show standards improved in reading and writing, following a dip in 2012. They are below the national average but improving. From low starting points in Nursery this represents good progress over time.
- Pupils' achievement in reading is a strength of the school. Over half of the Year 6 pupils made better than expected progress to reach the standards expected for their age. Pupils made slower progress in writing and not enough pupils gained the higher levels. Nonetheless, the school's own data and pupils' books show a much stronger picture across the whole school. Pupils are making greater gains in their skills so writing standards are catching up quickly.
- Boys are making swifter progress so they no longer lag behind girls. Disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs make similar

progress to their class mates. Pupils known to eligible for pupil premium funding achieve as well as other pupils in the school.

- Pupils enjoy their English lessons. They work hard and are keen to take part. Younger pupils are becoming increasingly confident in reading and writing because they have a good grasp of the sounds letters make. Older pupils are confident writers; they use vocabulary and punctuation well to capture the readers' interest. However, too many pupils have weak handwriting skills which sometimes limit the quality and quantity of the work they produce.

Teaching in English is good

- Teachers exploit pupils' interests to plan English activities which are meaningful and harnesses pupils' desire to read and write. Lessons are carefully structured so pupils gain new skills and knowledge through a clear sequence of activities. Teachers provide lots of opportunities for pupils to talk through their ideas before they have to put pen to paper. Teachers provide writing frames to help pupils scaffold their writing. However, these frames sometimes limit pupils' learning. This is particularly true for more-able pupils, who do not always have enough opportunity to extend their ideas or to work independently.
- Teachers are good role models. They encourage pupils to read for pleasure and to explore a wide range of authors. Teachers often share their own writing to help pupils improve their own work.
- Pupils are full of praise for the English teaching they receive. They think teachers are very good at making learning interesting. As one pupil commented, 'Teachers hook you in so you want to do more.' Pupils appreciate the range of learning prompts around the classroom which help them to improve their writing
- Teachers' marking is thorough, but it does not always make a big enough difference to pupils' learning. Not all teachers provide clear guidance to help pupils know what they need to do to improve.

The curriculum in English is good

- The curriculum is shaped to meet the needs and interests of pupils at Rimrose Hope. It is very well organised so teachers have clear guidance on the skills and knowledge pupils need to gain as they move from class to class. A whole-school focus on basic skills is bearing fruit in helping pupils make up lost ground. Fostering a love of books and reading is at the heart of the English curriculum. This means pupils read widely and often.
- Pupils have ample opportunity to use their reading and writing skills in other subjects, because English is the backbone to the whole-school curriculum. Good use is made of visitors, visits and links with the local community to enrich pupils' experiences and promote their enjoyment of learning. Although teachers are beginning to use information communication technology (ICT) and multi-media to make learning more creative, this aspect of English is not systematically planned for across all classes.

Leadership and management of English are good

- The subject leader's passion, drive and expertise have made a real difference to English teaching and pupils' achievement. Her influence is evident in all classrooms; teachers are in no doubt about what is expected of them. All teachers follow her clear guidance, which means whole-school policies are consistently applied. The subject leader has made sure teachers and other adults who support pupils' learning have regular training to update their skills. She seeks external advice and guidance to make sure the school is on the right track. For example, she has used the findings from the most recent Ofsted English survey report to implement strategies to help pupils work collaboratively in their lessons.
- The subject leader frequently checks the quality of teaching and the difference this is making to pupils' achievement. As a result, she knows what the school needs to do next to improve further. The action plan sets a clear route for future success with appropriate goals for Year 2 and Year 6. However, the plan does not go far enough in identifying the progress all pupils need to make from their different starting points to reach age-related expectations by the end of each academic year.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving pupils' achievement in writing so it matches the strengths in reading by:
 - reviewing teachers' use of writing frames to ensure more-able pupils have enough opportunity to extend their ideas and work independently
 - identifying the progress all pupils need to make from their different starting points in order to reach age-related expectations by the end of each year
 - tackling weaknesses in pupils' handwriting skills
 - ensuring teachers' marking provides clear guidance so pupils know the steps they need to take to improve
- ensuring the use of ICT and multi-media is systematically planned for across the whole-school so all pupils have opportunity to use these tools in their everyday English lessons.

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