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Mrs M O' Leary
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs O' Leary

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 24 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 you, the English subject leader and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; observation of three lessons; and short visits to classrooms.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

Achievement in English is good.

- Pupils achieve well across the school. In the Early Years Foundation Stage children make good progress and their needs are well met. High expectations prevail and children work well together and are keen to articulate their thoughts, ideas and feelings. At the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, 90% of children achieve a good level of development in reading and 80% in writing.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is above average, although attainment in writing is not as strong as in reading for the more able pupils.
- When pupils leave the school, standards in English are good. Most pupils make the progress expected of them and almost all pupils achieve the

level expected for their age. Last year half the pupils achieved the higher level of attainment in reading and just over a third achieved it in writing.

- Leaders analyse how well groups of pupils perform. Interestingly, in some year groups, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals achieve better than the rest of the pupils. Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after in public care, are given extra support in reading and writing. This is delivered through a range of targeted interventions to help pupils catch up with their learning. The impact of this work is evaluated effectively.

Teaching in English is good.

- There has been a focus on improving teaching. This includes the ways in which pupils assess their own work and that of other pupils. Work is accurately tailored to the needs of all learners and teachers make sure all pupils are clear about what they are learning. As a result of this work, leaders in school report that all teaching is good or better.
- A range of well-targeted interventions helps pupils improve their literacy skills. Both class teachers and teaching assistants teach specific programmes to small groups of pupils. Teaching assistants are trained in how to deliver the programmes to pupils and they regularly liaise with class teachers on the progress pupils have made.
- Staff training is helping to improve the quality of teaching. A recent development for staff to work together closely and teach in pairs is making a positive difference.
- Pupils report they enjoy literacy lessons. As one pupil told the inspector, 'I like the freedom that literacy gives you because it allows me to use my own imagination.' Pupils show good attitudes to learning in lessons and a determination to complete the work set.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to use questioning effectively to deepen pupils' understanding. Teachers demonstrate literacy skills effectively to pupils to help them improve and develop their work. In the very best lessons, teachers plan interesting and imaginative activities. As a result, learning proceeds at a good pace. For example, in a Year 6 lesson the class teacher and teaching assistant modelled an effective debate about the qualities of rice as opposed to mashed potato! Pupils noted the characteristics of effective debating techniques. This helped pupils later to debate who was the better singer, Ray Charles or Michael Jackson!

The curriculum in English is good.

- The English curriculum is planned well and covers a range of genre and there is a focus on the acquisition of skills. Working closely with other schools, you and the subject leader are already planning carefully how best to respond to the demands of the new National Curriculum.

- Phonics teaching is well planned, with pupils grouped according to ability. Sessions are taught by both teachers and teaching assistants. Training has supported staff in delivery of the phonics lessons. The progress pupils make is rigorously monitored.
- Reading and writing skills are very often taught in a cross-curricular way. Skills are successfully developed across a range of subjects, such as history and religious education.
- Pupils report that fiction and non-fiction books are used to teach literacy skills but that this often involves only extracts rather than complete texts. While this helps pupils to make progress, it does not encourage pupils to develop a love of reading. Pupils told the inspector that they would like their class teacher to read more regularly to them.

Leadership and management of English are good.

- English is well led and leads to standards that are above average.
- Monitoring of English includes lesson observations, book scrutiny, examination of information about pupils' progress and regular but brief visits to lessons. This provides an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses. Although all teachers have been observed in aspects of English teaching, such as the teaching of writing skills, no lessons have recently been observed on how to teach reading.
- The school improvement plan is suitably focused on improving reading and writing. This is closely linked to outcomes for pupils. For example, the school rightly aims to increase opportunities for pupils to be directly involved in assessing their own learning and knowing what they need to do to further improve their work. Ways to monitor the success of the school's actions are included so leaders can judge the difference they are making. However, there are insufficient opportunities for governors to monitor and evaluate the school's actions.
- Work to ensure assessments in writing are accurate is carried out in staff meetings, where all teachers agree on the National Curriculum levels for pieces of pupils' work. As a result, you are justifiably confident that information about pupils' progress is accurate. The school has not recorded pupils' reading ages, so it is more difficult to track progress in the development of reading.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- further developing guided reading and ensuring it is monitored well by senior leaders
- developing systems to record pupils' reading ages
- providing more opportunities for governors to be involved in monitoring the school's action plan, including meeting with the English subject leader
- developing the love and enjoyment of reading through teachers reading regularly to pupils.

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

Jane Millward
Her Majesty's Inspector