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Mrs K Warren
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Warren

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 6 November 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: discussions with you, the English subject leader and three pupils from Year 6; a learning walk with you; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work from this and the last academic years; hearing two Year 2 pupils read; observation of four sessions, one of which was a joint observation with you, and visits to sessions led by you and teaching support staff.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

Achievement in English is good.

- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have been well above average for the last three years. In 2013, all Year 6 pupils attained at least the level expected for their age in reading and very nearly all in writing. The boys did particularly well and, on average, have moved into Year 7 a year ahead of boys nationally in reading and writing.
- Pupils are articulate conversationalists. They listen carefully to others and use language maturely. Year 6 pupils ably justified their views about preferred books and authors and Reception children offered a rich collection of words to describe the fireworks seen the evening before.

- Boys and girls are willing readers and writers. They enjoy learning about language and are keen to improve. Their writing is usually neatly presented and well-constructed, with effective use of words and phrases. Several Year 2 pupils are starting to write at length and are using a range of connectives, speech and punctuation to good effect.
- Most pupils take off early in reading, which enhances their learning across the curriculum. Year 2 pupils use their phonic knowledge to identify new words as well as the pictures and their experience to make sense of the text. They read with expression and confidently talked about the storyline.
- Pupils, including those with special educational needs, those eligible for pupil premium funding and those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress over time. The school is aware, however, that the rate and amount of progress vary too much throughout the school. As a result, not all pupils do as well as they might and there is headroom for even higher attainment, especially for the younger pupils and in writing across the school.

Teaching in English is good.

- Pupils are attentive and motivated because teachers and teaching support staff make good use of drama, games and challenges to catch their interest and stimulate ideas. Well-prepared resources and lessons, often rooted in the on-going class theme and/or class story, ensure progression in phonics knowledge and in the skills of reading and writing.
- Staff make effective use of talk for writing. Younger pupils are being taught how to think through ideas, how to remember the order of the words they need and how to check the accuracy of their written work.
- Just occasionally, teachers are too quick in moving on to the next element or, by giving information and answers themselves, miss chances to probe and deepen what pupils know and how they express it. Similarly, although there are some very good models of marking of pupils' work, not all pupils consistently receive high quality feedback on how well they have met the learning intentions or how they can do better next time.

The curriculum in English is good.

- A strength is the honed use of class novels and cross-subject themes with integral visits, visitors and projects, to develop pupils' skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Pupils generate their own queries, conduct research on-line and from books both at school and at home, and compile reports, stories, poems, accounts and play scripts.
- Although pupils use computers, the school is rightly looking to ways to strengthen pupils' use of information and communication technology and mixed media to support progress in reading and writing.
- Skilful use of programmes and well-led sessions by teaching assistants and the headteacher helps pupils to catch up and to boost their performance.

- Aware that pupils did not all make best progress in reading and writing, the school has recently reverted to a systematic programme for the teaching of phonics from the Nursery onwards. It is also enhancing its collection of books for pupils to read at home and the stock of non-fiction in the school library based on pupils' choices.

Leadership and management of English are outstanding.

- You and the English leader share a passion for English. You want pupils to develop a love of reading and writing and have high expectations of staff, including newly qualified teachers, to provide a rich English experience for pupils. You lead from the front, regularly teaching English to groups and classes and celebrating pupils' successes as readers and writers.
- The English leader has drawn on her good subject knowledge and experience as a Leading Literacy Teacher to mentor staff and provide professional development sessions, including guided reading. Elements of the revised National Curriculum in English, such as higher expectations of pupils' knowledge and use of technical terms in English, have already been discussed and integrated into the curriculum.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are thorough. Your well-informed, accurate picture of pupils' progress, teaching and the curriculum have led to changes in emphases and approach which continue to have a positive impact on pupils' attitudes and performance in English.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- strengthening pupils' use of computers, electronic devices and mixed media as part of their learning in English
- sharing best practice in marking to ensure that all pupils receive high quality feedback on how well they have met the success criteria and what they can do better next time, especially in writing
- considering ways to utilise even more effectively teaching skills and expertise in English, particularly those of the English leader, to ensure a more even pattern of progress by pupils in all year groups.

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.

Yours sincerely

Sonja Øyen
Her Majesty's Inspector