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Mrs R Lee
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Lee

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 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: 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 requires improvement.

Achievement in English requires improvement.

- Pupils are beginning to make better progress in reading and writing. This is because the quality of teaching has improved. However, the improvement in rates of pupils' progress has not had sufficient time to impact on standards across the school.
- Standards are stronger in reading than writing. Leaders have prioritised improving writing and staff are receiving training on how to improve achievement in writing.
- The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected level in the Year 1 phonics check is lower than average. Leaders acknowledge this and have developed an action plan to improve phonics teaching. An appointment for a leader of phonics is underway for January 2014.

- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has improved from the previous year. When pupils leave the school, attainment remains lower than the national average and the more-able pupils do not achieve as well as they should.
- Current data held by the school now show an improving picture. Almost all pupils made more than expected progress last year. This is helping pupils to catch up with standards achieved by pupils nationally.
- Leaders in school track pupils' progress thoroughly and ensure the performance of groups is evaluated well. As a result, governors are aware of how pupils are performing.

Teaching in English is good.

- Leaders in school rightly judge the majority of teaching in English to be good or better. During the inspection, the inspector saw effective teaching, where pupils were clear about what they needed to achieve and high expectations were clearly articulated to pupils. Pupils completed work that was well matched to their ability. As a result of this effective teaching pupils are beginning to make good progress.
- Priority is given to improving any teaching that is not yet good or better. Coaching is regularly used and this is paying dividends because teaching methods are more consistently applied across the school. Whole-staff professional development is helping teachers to improve their teaching.
- Pupils report that teachers make learning fun and pupils enjoy video clips to help them learn. However, pupils also stated that they rarely have opportunities to use drama as part of their learning experiences.
- Teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar is now given greater focus. Teaching is more targeted according to pupils' needs and pupils are taught phonics in ability groups in Key Stage 1. Staff have a detailed understanding of what pupils are capable of achieving and provide appropriate and relevant support.
- Pupils are given challenging targets which are shared with parents and carers. These are referred to as part of the lessons and pupils know what they need to do to improve their work.

The curriculum in English requires improvement.

- The English curriculum is generally well planned and is developing well to meet pupils' needs and interests. Literacy skills are taught through a range of subjects. While writing skills are promoted across subjects, this is not systematically planned and greater clarity is needed to ensure all literacy skills are taught effectively.
- The curriculum is focused on closing the gap in attainment between different groups. For example, data show that the gap between the attainment of those 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, is closing in reading.

Leaders are prioritising writing to make sure the gap between different groups in writing is also reduced.

- To date, little work has been carried out to prepare for the new National Curriculum in September 2014 although leaders are increasingly focusing on the teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Leadership and management of English are good.

- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses in English. They are tackling previous underperformance and are focused on the correct issues. As a result, pupils are beginning to catch up with national standards in their reading and writing.
- The school development plan focuses on raising standards in reading and writing. The plan sets dates by which specific targets should be met so that progress can be measured and governors are involved in monitoring the success of the proposed actions.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning in English includes lesson observations, book scrutiny, examination of information about pupils' progress and regular but brief visits to lessons. This provides leaders with an accurate view about the quality of teaching. While monitoring is useful and detailed it is not sufficiently focused on specific lines of enquiry. For example, short visits to lessons do not have a precise focus such as teachers' questioning or their success in matching activities to different ability groups. Where teaching that requires improvement is identified, teachers are given action plans to help them improve.
- Governors regularly review the English work across the school. This is becoming more focused, leading to a greater clarity of what needs to be achieved.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring literacy skills are developed across all subjects
- using drama to enhance pupils' learning
- further sharpening monitoring procedures
- ensuring the more-able pupils achieve their potential.

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