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Mrs C Egginton  
Headteacher  
Wellgate Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Egginton

### **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 with Lee Owston, Her Majesty's Inspector, on 26 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 staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; listening to pupils read; and observation with senior leaders of six lessons and some small group sessions.

### **The overall effectiveness of English requires improvement.**

#### **Achievement in English requires improvement.**

- Pupils enter nursery below average in communication language and literacy. At the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, more pupils than average meet the expected level of development in communication, reading and writing. However, current leaders lack confidence in these assessments. Examples of assessed work confirmed the inaccuracy of some past assessments. The school's work with a local authority consultant is beginning to improve the accuracy of assessment.

- At the end of Key Stage 1, attainment in reading and writing has declined over a number of years and is broadly average. The proportion meeting the required standard in the national screening test of letters and sounds is average. Fewer-than-average pupils eligible for the pupil premium have met this standard. The gap between their attainment in reading and writing and others is wider than average. However, they made faster progress than others in Year 1 and Year 2.
- Over the last three years, attainment in reading and writing at the end of Key Stage 2 declined from above average to average. Attainment is below average for boys and pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding). Rates of progress at Key Stage 2 have slowed. In 2013, pupils made the expected levels of progress in reading and writing. However, fewer pupils than average made fast progress.
- New leaders have recently introduced changes to teaching and the curriculum which have begun to improve the quality of learning. In lessons, pupils are keen to learn and make thoughtful contributions. They enjoy reading for pleasure and are heard reading frequently. Good examples of writing in a range of topics were seen in pupils' folders and on display.

### **Teaching in English requires improvement.**

- The learning of letters and sounds follows a clear structure, is well-planned, and delivered at a good pace by teachers and teaching assistants. Effective strategies engage pupils in talk and enable them to help each other to read letters and sounds. Teachers and teaching assistants have just begun to implement this programme and some lack fluency and confidence. As a result, they miss opportunities to promote enjoyment in the story, or to extend learning by drawing on examples from pupils. Guided reading sessions are purposeful and the texts match pupils' abilities and interests.
- Teaching of grammar focuses on particular aspects of language and explanations and tasks are presented methodically. Teachers do not assess pupils' responses reflectively enough to check understanding or to adapt their questions and explanations. On occasion, teachers in upper Key Stage 2 do not have a sound grasp of the complexities of the grammar they are teaching. This means they do not always convey information accurately or identify errors promptly. Teaching of writing is too focused on completing a formal grammar exercise which is not linked coherently to the development of pupils' skills in composition and to their personal expression.
- The recent introduction of written 'steps for success' has given pupils a clearer idea of the skills they are learning and what they need to do to improve. Marking relies too heavily on ticks and does not provide enough specific praise when individuals use grammar or vocabulary particularly well.

## **The curriculum in English requires improvement**

- The curriculum provides comprehensive coverage of basic skills in reading and writing and in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Other subjects provide a meaningful context for writing. However, the different literacy sessions are not linked coherently enough to enable pupils to quickly and purposefully apply developing grammatical skills to their own writing. Opportunities to work independently on extended writing or research are under-developed, especially for the more able.
- Pupils are encouraged to read for pleasure with reading corners, opportunities to read with adults, and 'reading races'. A member of staff has enthusiastically begun to reorganise and replenish the range of fiction and non-fiction books in the under-used school library. She is planning to introduce e-readers to promote reading, especially by boys. Pupils enjoy using computers and tablets for research. Pupils have opportunities for role play and drama but these are variable across different classes.

## **Leadership and management of English require improvement**

- The new headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have set a promising new course for the development of English. Decisive action has begun to improve the accuracy of assessment and the quality of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Responsibilities are delegated effectively and the acting deputy headteacher and the subject leader have begun to implement actions and plans that are beginning to bring about improvements. Training for the letters and sounds programme has increased the range of strategies used by teachers and teaching assistants. A partner school with greater expertise and experience will audit and advise on its implementation.
- Leaders' have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in English and have begun to make improvements. Leaders plan to provide additional one-to-one support for pupils eligible for the pupil premium in reading and writing. Staff have begun to work more collaboratively and are responding positively to the strong lead, clear vision and prompt actions by the headteacher.

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

- making the teaching of grammar and the planning of writing lessons more relevant to the development of pupils' skills in composition and their ability to express themselves
- improving teachers' subject knowledge
- ensuring teachers respond to pupils' contributions more reflectively
- in marking and feedback, giving more specific praise when individuals use grammar and vocabulary particularly well.

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

**Bernard Campbell**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**