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Mrs J Randall
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Randall

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 10 December 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, your English subject leader, your deputy headteacher and a group of pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; a walk around the school with your deputy headteacher to discuss the school's work in English; and observation of four lessons and four short phonic (the sounds letters make) sessions.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

Achievement in English is good.

- Attainment in reading and writing improved considerably in 2012 and this has been successfully maintained. Writing has consistently been above the national average for the last five years. Current attainment of pupils in Year 2 in reading and writing shows that they are on track to achieve above average standards by the end of the year.
- Attainment in phonics is not as strong. In the phonic screening check in 2013, the attainment of Year 1 pupils was below the national average and for those pupils whose phonic knowledge was checked in Year 2, the proportion who achieved the standard was also below the national average. At present, although pupils are taught in groups according to

their ability, these groups are too large and this hinders the progress of most pupils.

- Pupils' progress in reading and writing is good overall. Pupils have positive attitudes to reading and writing and enjoy the lively and interesting activities planned for them. In one Year 2 class, pupils were excited and captivated when one of Santa's elves arrived with a sack of gifts for them to label using their phonic knowledge to write the captions.

Teaching in English is good.

- Teachers know their pupils well. They plan interesting activities including the use of a wide range of resources, such as information and communication technology (ICT), which motivate and engage pupils successfully in their learning. As a result, pupils make good progress and enjoy lessons.
- Lesson plans are detailed and clearly show the objectives for learning. Tasks are suitably matched to meet the differing learning needs of all groups of pupils. Clear steps to success are identified and shared with pupils to support learning in lessons.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and devise learning targets to guide pupils to improve. However, pupils are not always provided with enough guidance on how to improve their work or regularly enough given time to check whether they have achieved their targets.

The curriculum in English is good.

- The curriculum is well-organised and is planned to meet the interests of pupils. The creative approach to linking subjects together is effectively supporting good reading, writing and speaking and listening skills. Teachers involve pupils in shaping plans for learning and the interests of boys and girls are equally well reflected. Real-life situations are used well.
- Theatre visits and wider opportunities are regularly planned to enhance pupils' learning experiences and provide an effective stimulus for learning. For example, during the Year 2 theme of 'Time Detectives' pupils enjoyed the visit from a theatre company in their productions about the 'Great Fire of London'.
- The curriculum is regularly reviewed. Effective use is made of the analysis of the results of assessments to ensure the planned themes engage all pupils. Recently a new Year 1 theme of 'buildings' has been planned to increase boys' engagement in writing.

Leadership and management of English are good.

- The English subject leader is new to the role. He has wasted no time in ensuring all aspects of English continue to improve. A recent check of books in the school library identified the need to increase the range of

books on offer to pupils. In addition, to ensure that boys engage well in early reading, further reading books have been purchased which are particularly suited to the interests of boys.

- Senior leaders have correctly identified the most important areas for improvement in English, which are included in the school development plan. However, it is not always made clear how success will be measured against outcomes for pupils.
- Rigorous and effective assessments and the tracking of pupils' attainment and progress are used well to set priorities and inform senior leaders of staff training needs. The English subject leader is aware of the need to ensure that all adults delivering the phonics programme are well-trained. Plans are in place to update the knowledge and skills of teachers and teaching assistants in the teaching of phonics.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising attainment and increasing rates of pupils' progress in phonics by:
 - ensuring all staff are suitably trained
 - matching learning activities more sharply to pupils' learning needs and making sure all groups of pupils are actively engaged throughout the sessions
- increasing pupils' independence in learning by identifying next steps in marking and making more effective use of pupils' learning targets
- identifying clear, measurable and challenging success criteria in development planning, which focus on improving achievement for all groups of 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

Ann Henderson
Her Majesty's Inspector