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Mrs L Snowdon
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Snowdon

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 3 February 2014 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 staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work, and observation of seven lessons, including three joint observations with you.

The overall effectiveness of English requires improvement.

Achievement in English requires improvement.

- In Key Stage 1, pupils make expected progress from their starting points at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, so that their attainment remains broadly in line with the national average for reading and below in writing. The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard for the Year 1 phonics screening test is significantly below the national average.
- Marking and feedback are helping pupils to progress and they value this. However, some 'next-steps' marking in Key Stage 1 is not helping progression in writing. Standards of handwriting and presentation are poor and very few older pupils progress to joining letters.
- Progress accelerates in Key Stage 2, so that by the time pupils leave in Year 6 their standards are above the national average. However, in 2013 standards fell because fewer pupils, including the most-able, made better than expected progress in reading and none in writing. Most pupils eligible for pupil premium

funding (additional government funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals, those in the care of the local authority and those with a parent in the services) and those with special needs who are on the school action programme do not make the same amount of progress as their peers to close the achievement gap within school.

- School-based information shows an improving picture of standards, but the schools' own monitoring records and inspection evidence indicate that some assessments in Key Stage 1 are not accurate.

Teaching in English is good.

- Teachers exploit pupils' interests in fiction and the world around them to plan English activities which are meaningful and engaging. This motivates and harnesses pupils' desire to read and write. In most classes, lessons are carefully structured and activities are varied and matched to pupils' abilities.
- Most teachers check pupils' understanding effectively through questioning and by monitoring their progress within the lesson. In some classes, periodic 'pit-stops' give pupils time to reflect on and improve their writing. A consistent approach to marking ensures pupils are given opportunities to respond and improve their work and further checks are made on how well pupils are responding to marking.
- The regular and systematic teaching of phonics is improving pupils' skills in blending and segmenting sounds and words. They are showing increasing confidence and independence in their reading and spelling. For example, in the Reception class, more able pupils were able to write directions to help others find the pirate treasure. They used the phonic display to help them spell words independently.
- Teaching assistants skilfully support and promote learning. 'Working walls', to which pupils add ideas and learning points for reference when writing, are effectively supporting learning and promoting independent thinking and action. For example, in a Year 5/6 lesson, pupils used the information on the working wall to check if they had included additional features of myths in their writing and consider what they would need to include in their next draft.

The curriculum in English is good.

- The English curriculum is well-planned and structured to ensure breadth and balance with good coverage and progression of key skills, which are linked to themes and/or literature. This broadens pupils' knowledge and understanding and gives purpose to their writing. It enables pupils to develop skills of research and enquiry and to extend this learning at home.
- Recent developments in information technology are further enhancing this work and supporting improvements in the teaching of phonics and reading. Pupils regularly use information technology to research and produce information texts. Pupils say they value these improvements, especially those in the school news team, who manage and produce their own school newspaper and write presentations for the school website on issues such as e-safety.

Leadership and management of English are good.

- As headteacher, you are providing good direction for improvements in English. Checks on the quality of teaching and learning are rigorous and accurate. Teachers are being held to account more robustly for the progress of their pupils. A new tracking system is supporting leaders to analyse data more thoroughly and to target interventions to close gaps in learning for those pupils at risk of under-achievement, including the most-able.
- You are beginning to distribute the leadership of English. A new leader for the teaching of phonics is starting to have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and provision. The appointment of a newly-qualified teacher, who is an English specialist, means that the school is well-placed to improve the leadership of English further.
- Governance is strong. You have used the skills of the governing body to ensure that there are now better checks and challenge for standards in English.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving pupils' achievement in writing so it matches the strengths in reading by:
 - tackling weaknesses in pupils' handwriting and presentation skills
 - making sure that assessment in Key Stage 1 is accurate by regularly checking teacher assessment against pupils' work and the progress seen in books
 - making sure all teachers understand the progression of key skills in writing and use this to plan 'next steps' for pupil's learning
 - using the new tracking system to identify more precisely the underachievement of groups of pupils, in order to close the gaps in achievement within school.

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

Anne Bowyer
Her Majesty's Inspector