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Ms J Tillmanns
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Dear Ms Tillmanns

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 on 23 January 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 and with pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

Achievement in English is good.

- As a result of a strong emphasis on language development in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make a good start to their learning and make good progress from their starting points. Achievement in phonics (the sounds letters make) is particularly strong; for example, in 2013 all pupils achieved at least the required level in the Year 1 phonics check.
- Frequent monitoring of pupils' progress ensures that potential underperformance is identified rapidly and that interventions are put in place quickly. As a result, pupils, including those with a disability and special educational needs and those eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after in public care) make good progress.

- There is a strong emphasis on developing literacy skills that permeates the school. For example, a sponsored Spelling Bee happens every year which involves all the children and many parents.
- Children's skills on entry to the school vary year on year, with some whose language development is below what is expected nationally. Nevertheless, by the time they leave school, most children are achieving above national expectations.
- At the end of Key Stage 1, achievement in reading is well above national averages, with almost half of pupils achieving at the higher level. In writing, achievement is in line with national expectations.
- The school has identified that girls achieve better than boys in both reading and writing and have plans in place to redress this. For example, the curriculum has been re-invigorated to capitalise on boys' interests. In Year 1 and 2 pupils spoke positively about the newly developed topic on pirates. Training to raise boys' achievement in writing has also been commissioned through the local authority.

Teaching in English is good.

- Pupils make good progress over time due to effective teaching. For example, in the Year 3/4 lesson, well-targeted questioning ensured that pupils were clear about how to improve their writing skills and were very confident about expressing their ideas. Similarly, in a Nursery and Reception lesson, very high expectations ensured that children's learning moved on rapidly.
- Teachers identify and address strengths and weaknesses in literacy in all subjects. As a result pupils' skills in literacy are developing well.
- Written feedback on pupils' work is detailed, particularly in Years 3 and 4. Teachers helpfully set out the next steps required for pupils to improve their work. Pupils respond to marking and make their own corrections. Work is marked according to national curriculum levels at appropriate intervals.
- Pupils report that they are confident in their use of a range of strategies to help them with their reading because these are well taught and reinforced regularly. When the inspector asked what pupils do when they are stuck with their reading, one replied: 'That's easy; we sound it out.' The use of reading buddies in Year 1/2 is working well and pupils enjoy the opportunity to read regularly with peers as well as to teachers and other adults.
- Curricular targets for reading and writing are at the front of English books. However, insufficient reference is made to these in written feedback, so that children do not necessarily know how they are progressing against their targets.
- In most lessons pupils have positive attitudes to learning, which has a positive impact on their progress.

The curriculum in English is good.

- There is a focus on writing across all subjects and examples were seen of opportunities to practise writing skills in foundation subjects such as history and geography.
- Educational visits are used effectively to generate writing for a range of purposes and audiences, including extended writing. Children reported that they enjoy writing because they can write for different reasons. The most able writers have the opportunity to extend their skills further through acting as editors for the school newspaper.
- The school has a clear overview of literacy topics for all year groups, split into fiction, non-fiction and poetry. Plans indicate progression of skills taught and there is good coverage of different genres and of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Good quality planning at whole-school and class level ensures that pupils cover a wide range of high quality texts. For example in Year 3/4 they are reading *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*. This is then used effectively as a stimulus to enthuse pupils and improve their writing.
- Planning is well underway for the new curriculum requirements and is well thought out.

Leadership and management of English are good.

- The headteacher, who is also the English subject leader, monitors the quality of provision effectively. Regular lesson observations are carried out along with work scrutiny and analysis of information about pupils' progress. However, the school acknowledges that it now needs to develop a single system for tracking progress across all year groups and subjects.
- Teachers' judgements are moderated both internally and externally across a cluster of local schools that work collaboratively. As a result, judgements are accurate so that the school has a clear view of progress made.
- The link governor for English visits the school regularly to observe learning in lessons. This provides governors with a useful insight into the quality of provision in English.
- The school is working hard to nurture a love of reading and works with parents very well, providing workshops so that they can support their children's reading at home.
- The Reading Tree initiative developed by the school, to encourage reading at home more regularly, is very popular with pupils and is having a positive impact. Parents sign homework diaries to confirm their home reading and this generates points which lead to rewards. Pupils are very enthusiastic and are keen to accrue points quickly for themselves.
- The school action plan is focused on key priorities, such as improving boys' writing and increasing attainment of the most able in writing, to match attainment in reading. Previous action plans are evaluated for impact and have informed current priorities in a positive way.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing a single system to monitor progress that will be fit for purpose over time
- making better use of marking and assessment to measure progress against curricular targets so that all pupils know exactly what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve.

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