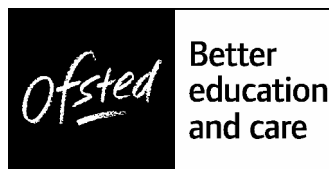


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Mrs K Harrison  
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Dear Mrs Harrison

Ofsted survey inspection programme - English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 25-26 September 2006 to look at work in English.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject the visit had a particular focus on our current survey theme: provision for poetry.

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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of eight lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement & standards

Achievement and standards in English are satisfactory.

- Standards in English are significantly above average in Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and post-16, although they are uneven year on year.
- Achievement is satisfactory overall. Girls enter the schools with high levels of achievement and make satisfactory progress.
- Pupils have very strong speaking and listening skills, are often skilled and imaginative writers and are fluent, intelligent readers.
- English makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development because teachers consistently encourage them to develop and share their views and opinions.

## Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning in the subject is good.

- Teachers form good relationships with the girls and are knowledgeable, occasionally gifted, practitioners.
- Lessons are usually lively and interesting. Teachers use questioning and discussion well to involve and engage the pupils.
- The quality and effectiveness of planning is uneven. Teachers rarely indicate in their planning what provision they intend to make for pupils with special educational needs or those who are very able.
- Pupils' progress is regularly assessed. The quality of marking is usually constructive and helps pupils to know how to improve.
- Pupils enjoy their English lessons and believe they make good progress.

## Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in the subject is satisfactory.

- The English curriculum meets statutory requirements with close attention to speaking and listening, the study of literature and extended writing.
- In lessons, pupils are introduced to texts of increasing difficulty and challenge, but their wider, independent reading is not monitored.
- Drama lessons are not sufficiently based on developing pupils' skills and lesson in the drama studio rarely taken in Key Stage 4.
- Good support materials are available for teachers to use but there is limited overt planning for progression in English schemes of work.

## Leadership and management of English

The quality of leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory with some strengths.

- The head of department is an effective teacher who commands the respect of both staff and pupils. He has a clear view of strengths and weaknesses in the subject, but reasons for unevenness in achievement are not always identified and followed through.
- The way in which teachers apply departmental policies and procedures is also uneven, resulting in some variability in the curriculum offered to pupils.

- Teachers, other than the second in department, have limited responsibilities delegated to them.
- Planning for improvement is a consistent feature of the school and of the department.

### Provision for poetry

Provision for poetry is satisfactory overall.

- Pupils like and enjoy poetry, but they prefer studying it to writing it themselves.
- Schemes of work and support materials for Key Stages 3 and 4 include a wide range of poetry with good attention to different poetic forms. Pupils write their own poetry, particularly in Key Stage 3, and this is occasionally published in school publications.
- Pupils develop their skills and understanding of poetry over the years, but planning for progression is not explicit in schemes of work.

### Inclusion

Inclusion in the subject is good.

- A strength of the department lies in its inclusive approach, with a focus on inviting and listening to pupils' views and opinions. Pupils from all groups feel relaxed and confident in their lessons and all make good progress.
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are very well integrated in English lessons. Those with English as an additional language are encouraged to contribute through careful questioning. They take part fully in lessons.
- Pupils on the Gifted and Talented register are not known to teachers and there is limited additional enhancement for girls who are very able.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- a more rigorous evaluation of the reasons why achievement and standards at the higher levels are consistently uneven
- better quality planning, to include provision for different groups of pupils
- more consistency in the way teachers follow departmental procedures and deliver the curriculum.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority/Local Learning Skills Council. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term and made available to the team for the next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Eileen Hill  
Additional Inspector