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06 November 2006

Mrs Whitlow
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Dear Mrs Whitlow

Ofsted survey inspection programme - English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 20 September 2006 to inspect 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, review of pupils' work and observation of three lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in English are satisfactory.

- Standards have been variable in both key stages since the amalgamation in 2003 but are now rising.
- The percentage of pupils achieving at least Level 2 in reading and writing dipped in 2005. The unvalidated figures for 2006 show an improvement although the proportion of pupils awarded Level 3 for writing remains low.
- Key Stage 2 results were above average in 2005. However, only five percent of pupils achieved the higher Level 5. The unconfirmed results for 2006 show that 25 percent of the pupils achieved Level 5 and that a further 70 percent achieved the expected level.

- The Contextual Value Added score (CVA) for English in the 2005 national tests was better than for mathematics or science and was satisfactory. The school's data confirms satisfactory achievement.

Quality of teaching and learning in English

The quality of teaching and learning in English is good.

- All teachers manage classes well and form good relationships with pupils. Teaching enthuses the pupils and engages their attention well.
- The best teaching has clear learning objectives that are shared with the pupils and are revisited during the lesson. Activities are challenging and are well-matched to the learning needs of pupils. These lessons feature a wide range of strategies that give pupils opportunities to talk about and explore texts.
- Teachers and classroom assistants have high expectations and pupils respond accordingly.
- Assessment in English is good. It is well integrated into schemes of work. Teachers assess systematically against clear criteria which are shared with pupils in an appropriate age-related manner.
- The school has begun to make better use of curricular targets and in the best lessons the pupils were fully involved in self-evaluation using the helpful marking guides.
- Activities such as trips to the library, visits from acting companies and book weeks enrich the English curriculum.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- Provision for English is broad and balanced. The school has detailed schemes of work which ensure a degree of consistency and progression in the pupils' experience.
- Reading is taught systematically and recent training has improved the provision for guided reading.
- Handwriting and spelling are also taught systematically and this has greatly improved the presentation of work across the curriculum.
- Provision for speaking and listening and drama is not planned as systematically as other aspects of the English curriculum.
- The school has suitable plans to improve this situation.

Leadership and management of subject

Leadership and management in English are good.

- There is good practice across the school; however, the stability in the teaching staff achieved this year has only just begun to have a positive impact on achievement and the school acknowledges that standards

should be higher, particularly for the more able pupils. Standards are rising in both key stages and the capacity to improve is good.

- The subject manager provides good leadership. Her teaching across the school enables her to model good practice and to keep a careful eye on the development of the pupils' reading and writing skills.
- The department is well managed with clear procedures and good practice in assessment. The school has suitable plans to increase the pupils' involvement in setting their targets. The English curriculum is continually reviewed.

Provision for poetry

Provision for poetry is outstanding.

- Poetry is very well represented in schemes of work across the school. Pupils' attitudes are most positive as a result of lively and effective teaching. All those spoken to could name several poets whose work they liked. Year 6 pupils were most enthusiastic about their current work. They particularly enjoyed the freedom to write imaginatively and creatively in poetry lessons.
- Able pupils in particular have enjoyed the wide selection of poems that they have met and were able to give cogent reasons for their likes and dislikes. Pupils have outstanding opportunities to write and perform their own poems. Older pupils learn systematically how to explore their own responses to the poems they study.

Inclusion

Inclusion in English is good.

- Achievement is satisfactory overall with boys performing well in relation to national expectations.
- The high proportion of pupils with specific language needs receive good support from specialist teachers.
- Boys and girls are equally enthusiastic about their lessons. They work well together in class which contributes to good behaviour and pleasant relationships.
- The school provides good support for pupils with below average attainment.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- increasing the proportion of pupils who achieve the higher levels at both key stages
- increasing pupil involvement in assessment and target setting
- revising the curriculum in line with the new strategy to include more systematic planning for speaking and listening and drama
- increasing opportunities for planned cross curricular writing activities.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop English in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority. 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

Cathie Munt
Her Majesty's Inspector