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Mrs Clarke
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Clarke

Ofsted survey inspection programme - English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 28 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 satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in English are satisfactory.

- Standards have been variable in both key stages over time. In 2005, results at Levels 2 and 2B+ in reading and writing rose considerably and were above the borough average. Key Stage 2 results were significantly lower than average; forty one percent of pupils did not achieve Level 4.
- The loss of a fifth of last year's Year 2 cohort, all of whom were predicted to be at least at the expected level, resulted in the 2006 results showing a substantial dip in reading and writing.
- The 2006 unvalidated figures for Key Stage 2 show a nine percent improvement bringing figures in line with the borough average. Current targets indicate that maintaining this improvement should be possible.

- The Contextual Value Added score (CVA) for English in the 2005 national tests was marginally better than for mathematics or science but was significantly lower than average.
- The pupils' attainment on entry is well below that expected for their age. The school's data and work seen in lessons indicate that achievement is satisfactory.

Quality of teaching and learning in English

The quality of teaching and learning in English is satisfactory.

- Teaching is technically sound and addresses the pupils' needs satisfactorily. However most of it did not galvanise the pupils, although they were well behaved and attentive and did as they were asked.
- Activities are adapted suitably for different groups of pupils and are well-matched to the learning needs of those who have learning difficulties. Some supervision for pupils learning English was inadequate.
- Lessons featured an appropriate range of teaching strategies and the best teaching had clear learning objectives that were shared with the pupils and were revisited repeatedly during the lesson.
- Older pupils had suitable opportunities to talk about and explore texts.
- In Key Stage 1, insufficient time was allowed for the pupils to respond individually or to discuss their thoughts with each other.
- Assessment in English has improved since the last inspection and it is good. Pupils' writing is assessed formally twice a term against clear criteria and results are used to plan the next steps in learning.
- The school has begun to use level descriptors systematically with the pupils and this is increasing their involvement in self-evaluation.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- Provision for English is reasonably broad but the school, rightly, has plans to increase the provision for speaking and listening, to provide a better balance across the subject.
- Schemes of work ensure a degree of consistency and progression in the pupils' experience as the school downsizes to a one form entry. There are limited links to other subjects.
- Year 6 pupils read complex material fluently and in Year 2 pupils read simple sentences accurately. However there is no systematic guidance on the teaching of phonics for teachers in the Foundation Stage.
- Provision for speaking and listening and drama is not planned as systematically as other aspects of the English curriculum.
- The careful choice of texts ensures that the curriculum is appropriately multi-cultural. Activities such as school plays, book weeks and Black History weeks enrich the English curriculum.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management in English are good.

- The interrogation of data has improved and the subject manager has a good understanding of which pupils are doing well and which ones need additional support.
- The recent stability in staffing has begun to have a positive impact on achievement. The school acknowledges that standards should be higher, particularly for the more able pupils. Standards are rising across Key Stage 2 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 English curriculum is being reviewed systematically this year.

Provision for poetry

Provision for poetry is satisfactory.

- Poetry is included in schemes of work each term but was only described in any detail in the planning for one Key Stage 2 class.
- There are no formal assessment schedules for poetry.
- Pupils' attitudes to poetry are mixed. Most like writing poetry, especially Rap; however, few could name any favourite poets. Although they did not find lessons particularly exciting, Year 6 pupils were most enthusiastic about a book of poetry that they had produced in Year 3 with the support of the Lambeth Young Citizen's programme.

Inclusion

Inclusion in English is good.

- The school helps pupils to integrate harmoniously and to get along well in lessons and in the playground.
- Pupils whose first language is not English make good progress due to effective support from the learning mentor and classroom assistants.
- Boys and girls are equally enthusiastic about their lessons.
- The school provides good support for pupils with a wide range of special needs, including those with below average attainment.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing a systematic approach to teaching phonics
- improving the proportion of pupils who achieve the higher levels at both key stages
- increasing opportunities for planned cross-curricular writing.

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