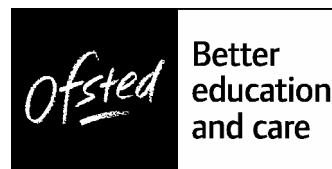


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Mr Lonergan  
The Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Lonergan

Ofsted survey inspection programme - English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 4–5 October 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 ten lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in English are good.

- PANDA data for 2005 shows that pupils' achievement in English was at least satisfactory, and better than other core subjects. Whilst end of Key Stage 3 test results fell in 2006, they still met the school's target.
- Standards at GCSE rose in 2006, and both A\*-C and A\*-G pass rates were better than in most other subjects. Targets were met in 2006 for all English courses in all key stages apart from those for the very highest grades. Lesson observation and work scrutiny confirmed good achievement and improving

standards in writing. Standards in speaking and listening are more limited and variable.

- Almost all pupils pass their sixth form English courses, some after joining with modest GCSE grades. Few, especially on language courses, attain the higher grades. Achievement is satisfactory.

### Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Teacher-pupil relationships are very good. Lessons are thoughtfully planned with good match to pupils' interests and abilities. However, lesson objectives are not always communicated clearly enough to pupils, so that the structure of learning and the skills' focus can become vague.
- Teachers communicate well and with interest. Discussion is a regular lesson feature but its value is sometimes limited because too much is whole class questioning by the teacher. In some classes boys dominate by short quick answers, girls become passive, and listening and behaviour deteriorate.
- In many lessons teachers have high expectations and good marking encourages pupils, giving them confidence in their abilities.

### Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced although Key Stage 3 schemes of work need greater consistency and clearer progression in learning.
- Early GCSE entry for several Year 10 groups is an imaginative strategy to improve the motivation of pupils in higher sets, and attendance generally.
- Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 experience a good range of literature, but their wider reading is very limited and is not systematically encouraged.
- The use of ICT within English is developing but still limited. Drama and media studies approaches are improving as a result of clearer curriculum planning.

### Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management are good.

- The department has many good features and a clear commitment to pupils' progress. The head of department provides good leadership, not least in skilled work in the classroom.
- Exam performance is carefully analysed. Lessons drawn from the evaluation inform good development planning and a broader vision for the subject.

- Management is organised and unfussy. Good collaboration and communication are leading to better consistency, for instance in approaches to assessment at Key Stage 3.

### Provision for poetry

Provision for poetry is satisfactory.

- Most pupils enjoy poetry. Teachers make good use of poetry to stimulate creative narrative responses.
- Key Stage 4 pupils are genuinely fond of their anthology work.
- Whilst a locally published anthology stimulates the poetry writing of younger pupils, older pupils rarely get the chance to write poems.
- The reading aloud of poetry by teachers is of variable quality, so that for pupils the experience, emotion and insight of the poem can become secondary to writing about it.

### Inclusion

Inclusion in English is good.

- Achievement is good although the progress of some higher attaining pupils is only satisfactory.
- The department consistently enters a relatively high proportion of pupils for both English language and English literature courses at GCSE.
- Visually impaired pupils are very well integrated and provided for.
- Boys and girls achieve equally well in written work. However, teachers have limited awareness of, and strategies for tackling, the issue of boy-dominated class discussion where girls become passive.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:-

- raising the achievement of the most able pupils
- improving speaking and listening skills so that more pupils contribute thoughtful extended answers in lessons
- making Key Stage 3 assessment more tightly linked to national criteria so that both teachers and pupils focus more precisely on how skills can be improved
- having clearer plans for encouraging wider reading, both for pleasure and for better understanding of the context of literature.

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/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

Jon Lövgreen  
Additional Inspector