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Mrs Gillespie
Headteacher
Stewart Headlam Primary School
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Dear Mrs Gillespie

Ofsted survey inspection programme - English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 09 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, discussions with pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in English are good.

- The school adds significant value to pupils' learning. Attainment on entry to the nursery is very low. At Key Stage 1, standards are below national averages, particularly in speaking and listening. By the end of Key Stage 2, results are above national figures, as they have been for several years.
- There is a 19% gap in results at Key Stage 2 for reading and writing, with girls outperforming boys by 10%. Action to improve writing is already underway, with good links to the local authority's English as an additional language project and well targeted provision for improving speaking and listening.
- Very good support for pupils' personal development helps them to learn well. Pupils have very positive attitudes to, and are enthusiastic about, their

learning. They work very well together and communicate with courtesy and respect.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning in English is good.

- Lessons are interesting, varied, well paced and well resourced, providing a good balance of learning in reading, writing and speaking and listening. Well structured and purposeful teaching assures progression. Skilful differentiation of tasks, support and resources, and good support from teaching assistants promotes inclusion well and impacts positively on the motivation and behaviour of pupils.
- A good combination of direct instruction with independent work results in pupils demonstrating good capacity to work independently and to show initiative. This approach develops taught skills well and extends vocabulary, for example, through talk partners.
- Assessment is used very well to secure learning and progress.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The English curriculum meets the needs of all pupils well. It is well structured, well planned and assures progression.
- Although providing a good balance of speaking and listening, reading and writing, work is underway to strengthen provision for speaking and listening to underpin further improvements in writing.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management in English are very good.

- The school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. It is clear about what it wants to improve and the strategies and support needed to bring this about. Performance data and management information are analysed rigorously, and comprehensive monitoring underpins judicious target setting.
- Leadership contributes significantly to good quality teaching and learning, in particular in the identification and dissemination of effective practice to support teachers who lack confidence in aspects of the English curriculum.

Provision for poetry

Provision for poetry is good.

- Overall, pupils' experience of poetry is well planned and secure. Provision is clearly established in schemes of work, although progression is not systematic. Some teachers use an active range of effective strategies for the teaching and learning of poetry, but not all feel confident to do so.
- Many pupils like poetry, although their ability to talk about poets and poetry is limited.

Inclusion

Inclusion in English is good.

- Work in English meets the needs of pupils well. Provision has a clear and positive impact on the motivation and behaviour of all groups of pupils. Differentiation to secure curriculum inclusion is largely successful.
- Intervention is well targeted. This includes good work with families and good linking of attendance and achievement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- extending provision for speaking and listening to include the use of talk partners for spelling, and teaching assistants working with individuals and small groups during teacher-led whole class work
- mapping progression in poetry.

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

Rosemary Matthews
Her Majesty's Inspector