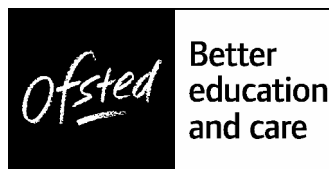


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13 October 2006

Mrs Mackenzie  
Shevington High School  
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Dear Mrs Mackenzie

Ofsted survey inspection programme - English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 11–12 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 seven lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in English are good.

- Standards at Key Stage 3 rose to average in 2005. The broad trend continued in 2006, although fewer pupils gained the higher levels.
- Pupils do better in both GCSE English examinations, especially Literature, than in most other subjects. From very high entry rates, pass rates are good. In 2006, English results dipped because of the performance of some average attaining pupils. A very positive feature in both language and literature was the doubling of the proportion of pupils gaining A\*/A grades, with boys also doing well here.

- PANDA data confirms that achievement was at least satisfactory in 2005, with pupils making better progress in Key Stage 4. Lesson observation and work scrutiny confirm achievement to be good.

## Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Lessons are well structured and planned to match the range of learning needs in sets, but some tasks do not demand enough of higher attaining pupils. Relationships are very good.
- The stress on neatness and planning in written work and redrafting helps pupils to produce final pieces of good quality.
- Teachers make appropriate use of oral work but do not get the range and depth of response from pupils because brief or quiet answers are too readily accepted. This inhibits pupils' personal response to literature.
- Assessment is a strength. Teachers mark work regularly and accurately, giving precise guidance on how to improve work. Pupils appreciate this.

## Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The curriculum is well planned to ensure a consistent and broad experience for all pupils, enabling the vast majority to take both examinations at GCSE. Media studies and drama are also available as GCSE options.
- The department has been imaginative in matching setting to the needs of year groups. Examples are online literacy examination for some pupils, extra provision for the relatively weaker literacy skills of pupils in Year 8, and a Year 9 higher attainers group to target girls who might not fulfil their potential.
- Arrangements for promoting ICT skills and wider reading are satisfactory, but too few pupils can set literature in a social or historical context.

## Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management are good.

- The department is very well organised. Clear systems and good communication ensure teamwork and a common sense of purpose.
- The head of department is an effective teacher and provides good leadership.
- There is good capacity to improve, provided that teachers use the current good quality of lesson planning as the foundation for more creative and stimulating approaches in lessons.

## Provision for poetry

Provision for poetry is good.

- Schemes of work ensure that poetry receives appropriate study and pupils have positive attitudes to reading and writing it.
- Pupils enjoy working with the GCSE anthology because they have good analytical skills and technical vocabulary.
- Most pupils are aware of poetry forms and try to use them in their own writing. Display and competitions raise the status of poetry.
- Thematic approaches to poetry study make poems relevant, but few Key Stage 3 pupils are encouraged to study a named poet.

## Inclusion

Inclusion in English is good.

- Achievement is good, and strategies for improvement show clear awareness of issues, for instance sustaining the progress of some higher attainers.
- The proportion of pupils entered for English examinations is consistently high.
- Setting arrangements show very good appreciation of what works best for differing groups, for instance in extra support for lower attaining GCSE pupils and a Year 9 group with L6+ target to address recent achievement concerns.
- Class discussions too often allow pupils to remain passive.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- making sure that higher attainers make consistently good progress
- increasing the expectations of both teachers and pupils of what should be achieved in class discussion and pupil pair work
- helping pupils to appreciate the power and beauty of literature so that they become more responsive and adept as writers.

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