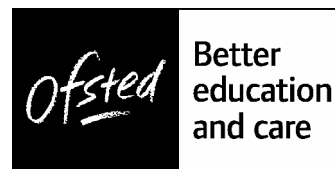


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29 October 2006

Mrs S Lawrence
Headteacher
Hamsterley Primary School
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Dear Mrs Lawrence

Ofsted survey inspection programme - English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19 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 three lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in English are good.

- Standards are overall above average.
- Achievement is slightly above average, and lessons observed confirmed that pupils' progress is good in both key stages. Performance in national tests indicates there is room for better achievement in writing, particularly by higher attainers at the end of Key Stage 2.
- English makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development and well being.

Quality of teaching and learning of subject

The quality of teaching and learning in English is good, with some very good features.

- All teachers manage classes well and form good relationships with pupils. They make learning intentions clear and give pupils time for sustained writing for a variety of purposes.
- The best teaching makes outstanding use of effective strategies that give pupils opportunities to talk about and explore texts.
- Some speaking and listening activities are less effective in involving pupils.
- Assessment in English is good. Teachers have improved the involvement of pupils in defining and using clear criteria. Marking makes clear how they can do better.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Provision for English is broad and balanced with a strong emphasis on creativity and thinking skills. Drama and media are incorporated well.
- Pupils write for a wide range of purposes, and have good opportunities to use computers for composing and refining text and for working in different media.
- There is good support for reading including a clear focus on teaching an interesting variety of literature.

Leadership and management of subject

Leadership and management in English are good.

- There is good provision for English; however, the school acknowledges that achievement should be higher, particularly in writing.
- This key challenge is reflected in the improvement plan, but strategies and success criteria are not fully clear, hindering evaluation.
- You provide good leadership for the subject and each teacher demonstrates aspects of good practice. Their subject expertise is deployed well and assistants are involved in planning. The team works well together.

Provision for poetry

Provision for poetry is outstanding.

- Poetry is represented well in schemes of work for all age groups.

- Teachers are clear about why and how they are teaching poetry. They share their real enthusiasm for poetry, making activities both fun and challenging. They plan well for progression and have a clear understanding of how to assess pupils' work in this area.
- Pupils experience a wide range of poems and become familiar with some poets' work. They are skilfully led to understand the craft of poetry through thought provoking activities, by writing their own, and by taking part in evaluative discussion of each other's work.
- Pupils feel positively about poetry. The absorption and satisfaction shown by the Key Stage 2 class spoke powerfully of its impact on them.

Inclusion

Inclusion in English is good.

- Achievement is good overall and this includes pupils who start with low levels of language, those with learning difficulties and those who arrive in the school relatively late. Boys do as well as girls.
- Planning shows care to avoid repetition and meet different levels of maturity in mixed age classes. Well deployed extra help in the classroom provides good support for pupils who make slower progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- clarifying and evaluating the strategies to raise standards in 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

Susan Bowles
Her Majesty's Inspector