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Ms Woodthorpe
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Dear Ms Woodthorpe

Ofsted survey inspection programme - English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 09 November 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, analysis 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 are broadly average. The majority of pupils achieve close to expectations in both reading and writing. This includes the larger than average proportion of pupils with English as an additional language. However, the school's own analysis indicates that some abler girls make less good progress than expected.
- Lessons observed and work seen confirmed that pupils' progress overall is at least satisfactory, as a result of a whole school emphasis on strengthening literacy teaching and assessment.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning in English is satisfactory.

- Teachers manage classes well and form good relationships with pupils.
- The best lessons have clear learning objectives and make good use of planned learning outcomes that give them direction. These lessons feature a wide range of strategies that give pupils opportunities to talk about language and texts. Teachers question skilfully, encouraging pupils to develop their thoughts and use spoken language accurately.
- However, some teaching makes less effective use of strategies which promote high expectations, contributing to slower pace and teacher-dominated discussion.
- Assessment in English is good. Expectations are set out clearly in schemes, and lesson plans are designed to move groups of pupils on from what they have shown they can already do. Teachers assess systematically against clear criteria, making increasing use of curricular targets and pupil self-evaluation.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- Provision for English is broad and balanced. The schemes of work for Key Stages 1 and 2 ensure a consistent experience for all pupils, with variety and progression.
- There is good support for reading and writing based on consistent approaches, for example to using phonic skills to tackle unfamiliar words and to learning handwriting.
- Teachers make stimulating use of ICT, and some regularly use drama and varied speaking and listening activities in their lessons.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management in English are satisfactory with some good features.

- There is good practice in English teaching. New approaches to teaching and interventions have resulted in better performance by higher attaining pupils. However, the school acknowledges that standards should be higher and have yet to show overall improvement.
- The subject leader is well supported by you and the deputy headteacher to provide a clear lead for English teaching to other staff. She models several aspects of good practice.
- English is well managed with clear expectations and consistent practice in assessment and monitoring. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to apply generally well understood strategies for English teaching.

Provision for poetry

Provision for poetry is good.

- Poetry is represented appropriately in schemes of work in each Key Stage. Pupils have many opportunities to write their own poems and to explore their own responses to a range of poems. Some of their writing is original and reflective, though this varies with the quality of stimulus and teaching.
- Pupils' attitudes are positive, and increasingly so as they grow older. They enjoy and remember poems, and can discuss why they like them. This is especially true when the strategies employed to explore them have been active and engaging.

Inclusion

Inclusion in English is satisfactory.

- Achievement is satisfactory overall although girls have under-performed in recent years.
- Teachers and other adults provide effective support for pupils with English as an additional language through their consistent use of appropriate strategies.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising standards, notably for more able pupils, especially girls
- spreading the best practice in English teaching, including consistency in assessment and planning, but also providing more activities which challenge and encourage learning.

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

Susan Bowles
Her Majesty's Inspector