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Mrs Bell
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Bell

Ofsted survey inspection programme - English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 21 November 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 four lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Standards and achievement in English are good.

- Pupils achieve well in the school. The school's data shows that many children have much ground to make up when they enter the reception class but many reach the standards that are expected for language and literacy.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and for the past four years, standards in reading and writing have been generally above average. The unconfirmed results for 2006 indicate that girls did better than the boys.
- The school's data for pupils at the end of Year 4 show that pupils continue to make good progress and standards improved in 2006 from the previous year.

Again, boys did less well than girls. Standards in reading were higher than in writing.

- Pupils make good progress in speaking and listening throughout the school.
- Minority ethnic pupils generally do as well as pupils from a white heritage background.
- Pupils enjoy English and many comment that they love poetry. They behave well and have positive attitudes towards their work. They respond very well to the many opportunities to become self-reliant.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

Teaching and learning are good and some teaching is excellent.

- Provision in the reception year is good with close attention paid to developing a love of reading. Children listen and extend their skills of speaking. The reading and writing areas are not particularly inviting.
- Relationships are very good so pupils have confidence to try and to learn from their mistakes. Teachers are aware of the need to motivate the large number of boys in the school and deliberately choose topics such as learning about magicians' tricks that have every pupil entranced.
- Every teacher now uses "talking partners". This is working very well and is extending skills of speaking and listening. Pupils are given support to develop a good structure to their writing through writing frames. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work.
- A major and developing strength is the use of learning objectives and success criteria. Every pupil understands this system. It has been extended to "group marking". This has increased pupils' skills of self-evaluation and is making them constructively critical about their writing. The success criteria currently focus on grammar and spelling rather than the equally important choice of language and shaping of ideas.
- Assessment is an area that is being developed. Progress is carefully tracked and any who fall behind are identified for catch-up work. There is currently no specialised assessment for the few pupils who do not speak English fluently.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is good.

- Planning for English covers speaking, listening, reading and writing well. Teachers plan using different formats, some of which do not cover how work is matched to the needs of different groups of pupils. The choice of texts and topics reflects the range of world cultures.
- Drama is covered mainly through speaking and listening. The coverage of media education happens by chance, rather than through deliberate planning.

- English is effectively enhanced by visiting authors, drama companies and taking part in events such as World Book Day.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good.

- The subject leader knows well the strengths in English and areas for improvement.
- Data are used well at whole school level to identify how well pupils are doing and how to support them to do even better.
- There is good team work across the school and systems such as the group marking and success criteria are used consistently across the school.

Provision for poetry

The provision for poetry is good.

- Poetry has a high profile throughout the school. Pupils are given many opportunities to read and to write poetry for themselves and are successfully taught the structure of various forms of poetry. Each class produces an anthology of poetry that includes poems written by well-known poets.
- Teachers and pupils, both boys and girls, enjoy poetry but find it difficult to name a favourite poet. There is no explicit planning for progression in poetry.
- Poetry is assessed in the same way as other forms of writing, using success criteria. Teachers say they find it more difficult to assess.

Inclusion

Inclusion in English is good.

The needs of different groups of pupils are met well so all groups make good progress in personal and academic development.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- continue to raise the achievement of boys
- improve the use of learning objectives and success criteria for writing by including all aspects of the writing process.

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

Sandra Tweddell
Additional Inspector