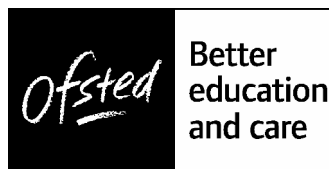


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Mr C Leach  
Great Wyrley High School  
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Dear Mr Leach

Ofsted survey inspection programme - English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 05-06 December 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 ten lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are unsatisfactory but are improving.

- The department has had severe staffing difficulties over the past few years which have affected standards and achievement in all years. A new head of department was appointed a year ago and staffing has stabilised. Standards are now rising due to effective leadership but a legacy of underachievement remains, particularly in Year 11.
- In 2006, results at the end of Year 9 improved greatly although more able pupils did not do as well as expected. The provisional data about performance shows that the value added from Year 7 was high. GCSE results for English language and literature improved slightly but were still not high enough.

Results at A and AS level were lower than anticipated. In all years, more able pupils did not do as well as they should.

- The inspection indicates that all pupils are now making satisfactory progress and the least able pupils sometimes make good progress. Standards at the end of Year 9, 12 and 13 are broadly average, but remain below average at the end of Year 11. More able pupils are starting to make the progress they should, but the department knows there is more to do.
- Pupils behave well and many enjoy English lessons, citing interesting and fun lessons as the reason why. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are less positive.
- Relationships between pupils are good. Pupils gain a good understanding of living in a culturally diverse world through the choice of texts.
- Many pupils lack independence as learners and this is a focus for the department's work.

### Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Teaching observed was consistently good across all years and some lessons were excellent. Learning is sometimes not as good as teaching as some pupils rely too much on their teachers.
- Consistent strengths in teaching are planning, very good relationships, attractive resources used effectively, questions that probe, very good subject knowledge and a brisk pace that wastes no time.
- Areas to improve are differentiation for the most able and tightening the lesson objectives which are occasionally too general.
- Assessment is a priority for the department and strategies have begun or are planned. Assessment is not yet used consistently across the department to inform teaching.

### Quality of curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- Departmental planning, still developing, is thorough and is used well. It ensures that the three elements of English are covered. Topics motivate boys and girls equally.
- Drama is taught as a separate subject, and is used excellently by some teachers of English as a vehicle for speaking and listening. Planning covers media education appropriately.
- Pupils are encouraged to enter national writing competitions. Booster classes are held and these have a positive impact on learning.

## Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall.

- The English leadership team is relatively new but has already made a difference and standards are rising as a result of its strong leadership. External advice is used well.
- Self evaluation is perceptive and honest and has identified appropriate issues. Successful action has been taken following an analysis of examination data.
- Systems to monitor and evaluate the department's work are being refined to involve all teachers.

## Provision for poetry

Provision for poetry is satisfactory.

- Teachers and pupils have a mixed response to poetry, about half enjoying it and half not. Teachers feel that some pupils enjoy it because it can be taught as fun and others enjoy the intellectual challenge. Some teachers find the analysis of poetry too demanding for their pupils.
- Most of the poems taught in Years 10, 11 and the sixth form are from examination syllabi and a range of poetry is taught in Years 7 to 9. The department has changed examination boards to make poetry more accessible to pupils.
- The new scheme of work has built in good progression into the teaching of poetry. New systems of assessment include a mark scheme for poetry which tells pupils the level they have reached and how to move to the next level.
- Poetry is published through display and competitions. Pupils have the opportunity to produce a poetry anthology as part of course work and at least one pupil has done this. Five years ago, the school commissioned a poetry anthology with contributions from pupils, staff and well-known people.

## Inclusion

Inclusion in English is currently inadequate because pupils have made too little progress in the past.

- Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make the same progress as others, although in some lessons observed their progress was excellent. More able pupils underachieve and boys do less well than girls. Staff are aware of the gender difference in performance and have developed effective strategies to tackle this.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raise standards in Year 11 and the sixth form, and in all years improve the achievement of more able pupils
- extend the learning skills of pupils, particularly their independence
- implement the plans for diagnostic assessment and ensure that assessment is used consistently across the department.

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