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Mr Paul Corrie
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Dear Mr Corrie

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Evaluation of the impact of the Primary and Secondary National Strategies.

I am grateful for the hospitality and co-operation of you and your staff during my visit with Cathie Munt HMI on 11-12 October to look at work in the Secondary National Strategy (SNS), focusing on English.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the SNS, the visit had a particular focus on the quality of continuity and progression for students on entry to secondary school.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness and impact of the SNS is satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- The strategy has made a satisfactory contribution to students' achievement. Attainment by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 is in line with national averages, representing satisfactory achievement from

students' average overall starting points. Standards in GCSE English Literature are above average.

- Good examples were seen of critical analysis of text at both key stages. Lower ability students correctly identified typical features of different genres, although weaknesses in spelling and punctuation marred the quality of outcomes. More able students responded perceptively to Shakespeare text.
- Oracy standards are average. In particular, lower attaining students find it difficult to articulate their ideas, hindering subsequent writing.

Quality of teaching and learning in English

The Strategy has made a satisfactory impact on teaching and learning; it is satisfactory overall. Some good teaching was seen although the majority was graded satisfactory.

- Most lessons are structured around appropriate learning objectives but some objectives define tasks rather than learning.
- A good range of assessment data is collected and used to plan overall programmes, organise groupings and monitor the progress of individual students. However, the data is not consistently exploited to plan lessons which challenge all students fully.
- Students' behaviour is satisfactory although in some lessons disaffected students are not successfully engaged by teachers in learning.
- Students have a good understanding of their current attainment levels, what they need to do to improve and of their overall targets. They are beginning to be involved in setting their own targets.

Quality of the English curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in English is satisfactory.

- Students are offered a suitably engaging range of work across all areas of the English curriculum.
- Strategy materials inform the curriculum at Key Stage 3, offering systematic progression. At Key Stage 4 there are strengths in the provision for English Literature.
- Some curriculum developments are made to address specific learning needs, for example the introduction of media studies at both key stages.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management of English are satisfactory.

- The subject leader has a satisfactory understanding of strengths and weaknesses in English and this underpins development planning. The strategy plays a key role in some elements of subject provision, for

example in assessment. However, the available information about the quality of teaching and learning is not fully exploited to plan strategic developments.

- The coordination of the strategy at whole-school level is satisfactory. Recent changes to strategy leadership, while building on the strengths of individuals, are not fully embedded. The involvement of middle managers in evaluation is underdeveloped.

The quality of transition to secondary school

The quality of transition of students into Year 7 is satisfactory.

- The transfer of information regarding students' academic and social development is good. Vulnerable students are well provided for.
- A good range of information is transferred from primary schools but it is not interrogated fully.
- Year 7 students settle well due to an effective range of induction activities. They feel comfortable and well informed about the school.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is satisfactory.

- A suitable range of intervention programmes supports the learning needs of an increasingly diverse range of students. Some use is made of strategy materials to support this work but the school also develops its own units of work.
- Satisfactory support is given in lessons to students with learning difficulties and disabilities. Teachers have access to a good range of information about students' needs but do not always analyse it effectively to adapt work. The quality of support provided by additional adults is inconsistent.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- at whole-school and subject level, to make use of a wider range of evidence, including focused subject monitoring and analysis of achievement data, to inform strategic development
- to improve the proportion of good or better lessons in English so that the academic and social needs of all students are met more effectively.

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 and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Long
Her Majesty's Inspector