

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045  
F 020 7421 6855  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



18 January 2006

Mrs S Magin  
Headteacher  
Foston Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School  
Foston  
York  
North Yorkshire  
YO60 7QB

Dear Mrs Magin

Ofsted survey inspection programme - English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 17 January 2007 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 two lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Overall standards and achievement in English are satisfactory.

- Results in national tests have, over the years, been above the national average, though they have dipped in the past two years. For the pupils in this school, this represents progress which is in line with expectations. Because standards of writing are weaker than their reading, the pupils have rarely reached the highest levels of attainment.
- Inspection evidence confirmed that pupils make appropriate progress in reading. Recently, key features of writing show signs of improvement. Pupils in the younger class use phonic knowledge to help them spell. They handwrite clearly, grasp the purpose of punctuation and have a developing sense of how to structure their

writing for a purpose. Older pupils adapt the structure and language of their writing to different purposes with growing confidence.

- Pupils enjoy many of their lessons, and take pride in their work. Older pupils are beginning to work independently as a result of effective teaching.

## Quality of teaching and learning of English

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with several good features.

- Strengths include very good relationships with pupils and a focus on encouraging independent learning. Successful differentiation engages pupils at all stages of development in challenging tasks, and varied and interesting activities, resources and approaches give pupils chances to talk and think before they write or speak.
- Weaker features observed include activities not broken down into simple steps of learning; lack of clear guidance for pupils about what counts as success; and less effective involvement of pupils in speaking and listening as a preparation for writing.
- The use of assessment to help plan teaching and learning is developing well. Good examples were seen of staff checking that pupils have understood before moving on, successfully involving older pupils in reviewing their work, and making clear in their planning and marking what has been achieved and what needs to be done next. Pupils' work is analysed to inform teaching plans; they have been set appropriate targets for writing and these are being monitored.
- A new recording system for English is at an early stage of use. Currently teachers do not record assessments of speaking and listening.

## Quality of curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- It provides a suitable balance of reading and writing activities which reflect pupils' interests and develop their skills progressively.
- Teachers provide stimulating activities – such as observing a rabbit – to encourage discussion and writing.

## Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management of English are satisfactory, with some significant strengths.

- Action to improve writing since the previous inspection was initially slow but has accelerated with the appointment of an experienced and proactive literacy coordinator who models good practice.

- An appropriate action plan is being implemented and good practice is being shared across the team.
- A system to record assessment and track progress is being introduced.
- There has so far been little use of other approaches to help assure the quality of English teaching, such as peer observation.

### Provision for poetry

Provision for poetry is good.

- Pupils experience a good range of poetry. Younger pupils play games with rhyming and rhythmical poems. Pupils progress to investigating more challenging poems which use sustained metaphors.
- Boys and girls are enthusiastic about poetry. Some engaging teaching approaches lead pupils to understand the craft of poetry writing and when well planned activities stir their imaginations, they stretch their use of language to a higher level.
- They have regular opportunities to write their own poems, and sometimes enter competitions.

### Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is satisfactory.

- Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make progress in line with expectations, because the school recognises and plans carefully for pupils' individual needs from an early stage.
- Recently, the use of strategies which promote independent learning has had a positive impact on the motivation, behaviour and progress of some vulnerable pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raise standards of writing
- develop consistent ways of recording assessment and tracking progress
- find ways of evaluating and developing the effectiveness of teaching in English.

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