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Mrs J Goodfellow
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Dear Mrs Goodfellow

Ofsted survey inspection programme - English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 25 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 five lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards in English

Overall, pupils' achievement and standards are good.

- Standards have improved significantly in recent years. Pupils' attitudes to learning are exceptional and they enjoy their work.
- Many pupils start from a very low base. This includes children at an early stage of learning English, who do as well as their peers by the end of Key Stage 2. The school is affected by high local disadvantage and mobility. Despite significant obstacles to literacy, no groups of pupils underachieve.

- Pupils make outstanding progress in speaking and listening. Some children start nursery barely able to communicate, but in the reception class, they routinely collaborate, ask questions, and say please and thank you to each other. Older pupils articulate ideas fully and listen to each other well.
- Pupils' reading and handwriting have improved significantly since the last school inspection. However, few reach the higher levels in writing. Results in national tests in English are still below average and lower than in other core subjects.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning in English is good.

- Good teaching has had a strongly positive influence on overcoming low starting points in literacy.
- Lessons consistently feature very careful linking of assessment and planning and a clear direction. Precise learning outcomes, which include high level expectations as well as basic skills, are shared with pupils.
- Teachers use diagnostic assessment, for example through a "cold" task at the start of a project. They then plan an effective sequence of active learning. For example, when pupils in Year 4 prepared to write a report, they orally rehearsed reporting in an impersonal style before writing and drafted a causally connected sentence on a wipe board.
- Work is assessed against the shared criteria, and teachers' comments give pupils a clear understanding of their progress.
- Occasionally pupils' work shows that teaching has been less effective. Class management is occasionally weaker, for example, in ensuring pupils can clearly read a whiteboard or giving well timed reminders about "What I am looking for".

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is outstanding.

- The curriculum gives strong reasons for communicating well. Each half term every pupil takes part in a visit or event, linked to a classic text.
- Clear policies for teaching oracy, reading, spelling and handwriting are consistently followed.
- The curriculum recognises how English is changing in the 21st century. All pupils visit the cinema to see a film twice a year and older pupils discuss how films tell stories with confidence. The title pages for school's public documents and classroom notices are often produced by pupils.

- Good additional provision for middle and lower attaining pupils has contributed to an increase in those reaching higher levels in tests and good progress by those with learning difficulties or disabilities.

Leadership and management in English

The leadership and management of English are outstanding.

- Governors and senior staff, supported by the local authority, have led and sustained a steady improvement in standards and inclusion.
- The literacy coordinator has a strong sense of direction and excellent subject knowledge. She models outstanding teaching and inspires colleagues to aim high.
- Use of data, planning, monitoring and evaluation of approaches are exemplary. The way forward is made clear to all staff, who in almost all cases have responded effectively. All have opportunities for professional development, and this has led to good understanding and consistency.
- Though major challenges remain and standards in English are not yet high enough, achievement is sound and the drive for improvement continues apace. The capacity to improve is very strong.

Provision for poetry

Provision for poetry is outstanding.

- The literacy coordinator is an enthusiast who encourages a lively and adventurous approach.
- The plan for poetry is progressive, wide ranging and coherent with other areas of learning. It sets out a good variety of poems that pupils should experience and what they are expected to do with poetry as they mature, including a wide range of interesting speaking and listening, reading and writing activities.
- Poetry is woven into the life of the school from the earliest days, for example in action songs during break in the Foundation Stage. Pupils are challenged from an early age to express their observations and feelings in poetic form, and teachers respond to their meaning as well as features of style. By Year 5, pupils write poems which convey moods through metaphor and carefully chosen phrases.

Inclusion

Inclusion is good.

- Vulnerable pupils make satisfactory progress in English, in line with their peers, by the age of 11. Though in general they achieve better in

maths and science, those who start at an early stage of speaking the language move on a long way in English.

- Pupils taking free school meals and those with learning difficulties or disabilities achieve in line with expectations and, over time, no groups underachieve.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving writing
- ensuring consistency of quality of teaching.

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