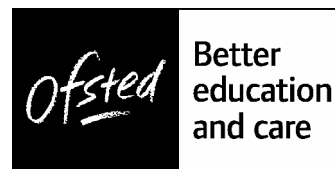


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26 January 2007

Mr H Formella
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Formella

Ofsted survey inspection programme - English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19 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, discussions with pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be satisfactory.

Standards and achievement

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- On entry to the school, attainment is below average. Standards remain below average at the end of both key stages.
- Contextual value added data shows that pupils generally make satisfactory progress in English and there are signs of higher rates of achievement of pupils currently in the school.
- Recent results show a downward trend, principally in writing, and the standard of boys' writing is significantly poorer than girls'.
- Attainment in speaking and listening is in line with expectations at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2. Given the level of achievement in speaking and listening, pupils write with less fluency than might be expected. However, current teaching is targeted well on bridging this gap.

- English makes a good contribution to the personal development of pupils through opportunities for them to express their views on a range of issues within lessons and more widely. Pupils use each other well as a resource for learning and communicate with courtesy and respect.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning overall is good.

- The school has a high mobility factor and most newly arrived pupils are learners of English as an additional language. This affects the school's overall test results negatively. Teaching is currently good. However, many pupils still lack the skills to learn independently; as a result, their learning is no better than satisfactory.
- Teachers are clear about strategies required to improve standards and use these well.
- Lessons are interesting, varied and well resourced, providing a good balance of learning in reading, writing and speaking and listening.
- A good combination of direct instruction with independent work results in pupils demonstrating good capacity to work independently.
- Assessment has improved markedly and is now used very well to secure learning and progress, particularly in writing.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Following a fundamental review, the English curriculum now meets the needs of pupils well and provides good progression in learning.
- The school has worked very hard to adapt the National Curriculum to its pupil population in order to engage them in learning. This is now happening effectively but recent, good strategies have not yet had sufficient impact on standards.
- Speaking and listening skills are developed well through drama at Key Stage 1. Information and communication technology is increasingly used well.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

- Following several years of instability, staffing is now stable and the teaching of English more systematic as a result. The school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. It is clear about strategies for improvement and the support necessary to bring this about.

- Performance data and management information are used well to track and analyse the progress of pupils, although not yet to pinpoint all pupils at risk of low attainment.
- Action to improve is well underway. The action plan to improve writing contains a range of good strategies, but does not include expected improvements in outcomes. This limits the school's capacity to evaluate the impact of interventions.

Provision for poetry

Provision for poetry is satisfactory.

- Poetry is firmly established in schemes of work, although planning for progression is less secure.
- Poetry is well promoted, for example through high quality displays and competitions.
- Pupils like poetry, although their ability to talk about poets is limited.

Inclusion

Inclusion is satisfactory.

- Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress in English.
- Work in English now meets the needs of pupils well. Provision has a positive impact on motivation and good support from teaching assistants promotes inclusion well.
- Nevertheless, at Key Stage 2, some boys who are struggling with writing do not receive all the help they need as teachers are constantly needing to refocus their attention on pupils who are early learners of English.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving the standard of writing by targeting improvement strategies more specifically at boys at Key Stage 2
- specifying success criteria in the writing action plan
- mapping progression in poetry.

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

Rosemary Matthews
Her Majesty's Inspector