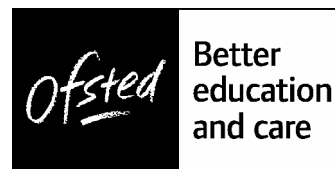


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02 February 2007

Mr P Henshaw
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Dear Mr Henshaw

Ofsted survey inspection programme – English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and the pupils, during my visit on 01 February 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 theme: the 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 three lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards in English

Achievement is good overall.

- Standards are well below national expectations because of the complex nature of the pupils' needs. However, the small but significant steps that pupils make indicate that achievement is at least satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4.
- Achievement in speaking and listening is good throughout both key stages and progress in reading is generally satisfactory.
- Although standards in handwriting vary, pupils take a pride in their work and many make good or very good progress.
- Boys tend to do better than girls in English, and the school is in the process of identifying suitable strategies to further support girls' progress and achievement.

Quality of teaching and learning in English

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall.

- Teaching seen during the inspection was very good. Lessons are well planned and structured to meet the complex individual needs of the pupils. Teachers give very clear explanations, use questioning techniques well to check and reinforce learning and maintain a brisk pace. As a result, pupils are keen to learn and make good progress during English lessons.
- Suitable assessment systems are in the process of being established to ensure that more accurate data is used to inform planning and to track pupil progress. However, although satisfactory systems of teacher assessment and annual review are well established, it is too soon to judge the impact of the new system.
- The marking of pupils' work varies and the quality is inconsistent. At best it links well to learning objectives, is evaluative and provides clear guidance on how to improve. However, in many instances it is insufficiently analytical, difficult for pupils to understand and lacks detail.

Quality of curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The English curriculum is well planned to ensure that the varying needs of the pupils are met. There is a good balance between reading, writing, speaking and listening and there is a suitable emphasis placed on differentiation which puts the needs of the pupils at the centre of curriculum development.
- There are well planned English links to other areas of the curriculum, such as in history and design technology, and very good use is made of information and communication technology to support the English curriculum. Enrichment activities such as theatre visits have a positive impact on pupils' attitudes towards English.
- There is a good balance between literature and language. The use of carefully selected texts, which are relevant to the needs of the pupils, helps to ensure high levels of pupil interest in literature.

Leadership and management of English

The quality of leadership and management is good overall.

- The role of curriculum leaders has been clarified following the last inspection and this has had a positive impact on the provision for English.

- With the very good support of yourself and your deputy headteacher, the English co-ordinators are developing clear and cohesive strategies for improving the quality of teaching and learning in English. There is a collaborative approach towards reviewing and developing the provision for English and this is well supported by governors.
- Action plans for each key stage complement each other well. However it is not made sufficiently clear how monitoring and assessment data informs improvement priorities. Also some of the success criteria lack clarity regarding how the impact of the actions is measured against the outcomes for pupils.
- Resources are well organised and helping to raise standards, although some sets of class texts are in need of up-dating.

Provision for poetry

The provision for poetry is good.

- Poetry is well planned and frequently features in English schemes of work as well as in other areas of the curriculum.
- Pupils demonstrate an enthusiasm for poetry, which is shared by many teachers. They are familiar with a number of poets and poems and many write insightful poetry, for example on loneliness inspired by a study of 'The Listeners'. Many pupils demonstrate in their poems a deeper appreciation of the power of words than is evident in their prose writing.

Inclusion

Inclusion is very good.

- The school is clearly highly committed to ensuring that all pupils' needs are accurately identified and met. Staff know each pupil well and provide sensitive and caring support for the wide range of physical, emotional and educational needs. In this they are well resourced and a particular strength is the small class sizes and well differentiated teaching.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving action plans in English to ensure that they are informed by monitoring and assessment data and have clear and measurable success criteria
- improving the quality and consistency of the marking of pupils work
- replacing any outdated texts.

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

Chris Nye
Her Majesty's inspector