

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

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



26 March 2007

Miss Rebecca Plaskitt  
Headteacher  
Middleton Primary and Nursery School  
Harrow Road, Wollaton Park  
Nottingham, Nottinghamshire  
NG8 1FG

Dear Miss Plaskitt

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 15 March 2007 to inspect 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, review of pupils' work and observation of five lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be good.

Achievement & standards

Achievement and standards in English are good.

- Standards of reading and writing are broadly average at the end of Key Stage 1.
- Test results have been variable in English over recent years at the end of Key Stage 2. However, they have been above average for two of the past three years and last year's results were especially good.
- The progress made by pupils has also been good overall over the past three years. Pupils' achievement was very high in 2006.
- Although the intake to the school has changed over recent years and it now receives increasing numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups, attainment on entry to Key Stage 1 appears to be broadly average.

The intake represents the full range of ability including some very able pupils.

- Evidence from the inspection, including lesson observation and work sampling confirmed that standards are above average.
- Analysis of the data shows that girls perform substantially better than boys in English. In addition, value added data suggests that some groups, such as pupils with special educational needs and pupils who are eligible for free school meals, do not achieve as well as other groups. This is something the school needs to monitor more closely.

### Quality of teaching and learning in English

The quality of teaching and learning in English is good.

- Teaching was good overall across the lessons observed during the inspection.
- The teaching observed was lively and enthusiastic and this helped to engage pupils' interest. Relationships were very good. Teachers worked hard to make use of a wide range of strategies within lessons and this motivated pupils. The pace of learning was good. Lessons featured some effective pair and small group work.
- Discussions with pupils were very stimulating. Pupils were very clear that they enjoyed lessons where learning was fun. The year 6 pupils did not in general consider English to be one of their favourite subjects. They felt that lessons were sometimes repetitive and that topics "dragged on too long". This may be related to the school's recent adoption of 2/3 week units in English.
- In discussion, pupils were unclear about how to improve their work in English. This is surprising in view of evidence of current good practice. Marking is detailed and often related to clear learning objectives. Teachers set very specific targets for improvement, for example, how to move from level 4c to 4a. Teachers also provide clear criteria through the use of writing "toolkits". However, pupils do not appear to apply this directly to their own work on a day-to-day basis and marking does not relate closely enough to the curricular targets in a way that currently helps pupils.

### Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- The school has reviewed the curriculum recently in order to match the needs of pupils, especially boys, more effectively. Links have been developed between English and other subjects and strategies are being employed that will stimulate boys. Work is planned through 2/3 week units; this gives shape and coherence to English but may lead to some losses in pace and pupils' motivation.

- Provision for reading is good. This includes a systematic approach to phonics based on the school's involvement with a local authority (LA) pilot project. Wider reading is developed through planned guided reading sessions, time for silent reading and encouraging pupils to write about their independent reading.
- The work sample revealed that most teachers give pupils a broad experience of writing across a range of genres. There were some good examples of pupils' extended writing.
- The school provides a good range of enrichment activities. While these do not always focus on literacy, they are well used by teachers to give pupils something interesting to talk or write about.

### Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management in English are good.

- Self evaluation in English is honest and broadly accurate.
- Standards in English have improved over the past three years and the school is very open to innovation. It has been involved in several LA projects to raise standards including a current focus on writing.
- Planning for English across the school is good.
- The current subject leader has been involved in a wide range of monitoring activities including getting feedback from pupils, auditing reading provision, work sampling and lesson observation. The outcomes of this work have been reported back to staff. Good training has also been provided.
- The subject leader has also produced an effective action plan. This provides a clear sense of direction to subject development although success criteria should at times be clearer.
- The school currently tracks pupils' progress systematically. However, it has not always analysed performance data closely enough, especially in relation to the analysis of achievement by different groups.
- You already have a clear agenda for further improvements in English.

### Provision for poetry

Provision for poetry is good.

- Poetry is securely built into units of work, following guidance from the Primary National Strategy. This means that pupils study a good range of poems as they move through the school.
- Pupils like poems and speak enthusiastically about their poetry lessons. Many can remember poems they have studied, especially where they have been asked to learn and recite poems.
- Teachers are keen on poetry and frequently collect pupils' poems into class anthologies. The quality of pupils' poetry writing is high.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- monitoring the impact of current approaches to planning in English on pupils' work and their motivation
- improving the clarity of feedback to pupils about their work through marking and target setting
- developing the analysis of performance data in relation to pupils' achievement, including key groups of pupils.

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

Philip Jarrett HMI  
Subject Adviser for English