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Mr D Gaydon
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Gaydon

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 14 May 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: discussions with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, review of pupils' work and observation of four lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Standards in English are above average. Achievement is good.

- Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are consistently above average in English, with particularly good performance in writing.
- Pupils leave the school at the age of 10 and before the Key Stage 2 national tests. The school uses optional tests to track pupils' achievement across Years 3-5. The data provided confirms that most pupils achieve their target grades and some do better than that. This confirms good achievement overall.

- Evidence from lesson observations and discussions with pupils confirms that standards in English are above average. Pupils' oral communication skills are especially well developed.
- Provision for more able pupils has improved and they achieved well in the national tests at Key Stage 1 in 2006.

Quality of teaching and learning in English

The quality of teaching and learning in English is good.

- Pupils enjoy lessons in English and their enthusiastic response to aspects of English such as reading and poetry reflects good teaching.
- Lessons observed were consistently good with some elements that were outstanding. Lessons are marked by good relationships and effective class management. The most effective lessons featured very good work on speaking and listening, a high level of challenge to pupils and interesting activities that motivated pupils.
- The sample of pupils' books showed good variety in pupils' work across English although some Key Stage 2 classes do not build as well as they might on the good extended writing in Year 2.
- The school is currently seeking to develop assessment practice. Teachers observed were clear in their use of learning objectives and learning outcomes. The best teaching showed good understanding of individual pupils' strengths and weaknesses.
- Marking gives positive feedback to pupils; the most effective marking also identifies areas for improvement. The school is currently changing its approach to learning targets. However, at present, pupils are not as clear as they should be about how to improve their work in English.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in English is outstanding.

- The school offers a wide range of enrichment activities that support work in English. This includes: initiatives to promote reading for pleasure; an annual Book Week; theme days such as one focusing on detective stories; drama and music productions; story writing competitions for pupils; and visits by the younger pupils to the local library dressed as nursery rhyme characters.
- The school also has a clear policy on homework for all pupils that involves even the youngest pupils in independent research.
- There is good provision for reading. The school promotes reading for pleasure well and Year 5 pupils were able to talk knowledgeably about their favourite authors. Time is provided for independent reading and the school has an annual Reading Champions competition. Training has focused on guided reading and practice is monitored by the subject leader. The school has also reviewed its provision for phonics and

introduced an ICT based programme that meets the recommendations of the recent Rose report.

- The programme for English is well balanced. In addition to the current focus on reading, standards of writing are high and good provision is also evident in speaking and listening. Planning for English has some innovative features, including the use of thematic units which develop cross curricular links.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management in English are outstanding.

- The subject is very well led by a knowledgeable and enthusiastic subject leader who has had a positive impact on provision across the school. The approach to English is reflective and self-critical.
- Self evaluation in English is accurate and based on good review of strengths and weaknesses. Monitoring and evaluation are effective. The school has identified appropriate areas for improvement and the action plan is good quality although the success criteria should be sharper and more related to pupils' standards.
- There is a clear sense of direction to work in English. Strengths and innovations in the curriculum also reflect very good leadership.
- The school tracks pupils' progress through the optional tests. However, the use and analysis of this data is not as effective as it might be in evaluating pupils' levels of progress.

Provision for poetry

Provision for poetry is good.

- Poetry is built into schemes of work following guidance from the Primary National Strategy. This ensures that poetry is part of a balanced programme across all classes in English.
- The subject leader is enthusiastic and knowledgeable about poetry. This ensures that it retains a good profile in work across the school. Pupils have opportunities to take part in poetry competitions and some teachers collect anthologies of pupils' poems.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards poetry; the Year 5 pupils in particular were able to speak particularly well about the poetry they had read. Some approaches to teaching poetry are innovative; for instance, poems were well used on a recent residential trip.

Inclusion

Inclusion in English is outstanding.

- The school has a close link with a local special school and some pupils from the special school work full time in your school. Evidence from my visit suggests that this is working very well. One lesson observed showed all the pupils collaborating well together, with the special school pupils fully involved. Pupils respond well to each other, showing good understanding and mutual support.
- Achievement is good overall and able pupils do especially well.
- All pupils are fully involved in lessons through effective teaching, varied activities and well targeted questioning.
- Teachers and teaching assistants plan closely together and good support is provided for pupils who need extra help. The school uses performance data to identify and target pupils who are under-achieving. The school's involvement in the Making Good Progress pilot should lead to improved resources for supporting pupils with special needs.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- analysing more effectively the data about pupils' performance in Key Stage 2
- extending current assessment procedures in order to help pupils understand better how to improve their work 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. 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

