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Mrs J Crow  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Crow

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English and citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during our visit on 12-13 June to look at work in English and citizenship.

As outlined in the initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subjects, the visit had a particular focus on our current survey themes: in English, provision for poetry; and, in citizenship, teaching and learning about Britain's diversity.

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 eight lessons in both subjects.

The overall effectiveness of English and citizenship was judged to be good.

English

Achievement and standards

Standards in English are above average overall. Achievement is good.

- Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average and pupils make good progress.
- Standards of reading and writing are average at Key Stage 3 and above average at Key Stage 4. Standards of speaking and listening are

above average at both key stages. Standards in the sixth form are average. Achievement in lessons is good.

- Results at Key Stage 3 fell from above the national average to average in 2006. Boys achieved as expected and girls excelled, resulting in a 24% gap in performance at Level 5. Results at Level 6 were below average.
- At Key Stage 4, GCSE results in 2006 were above average, but there was a large gap in the performance of girls and boys in English Language.
- Standards of presentation vary from outstanding to poor.
- English makes a good contribution to the personal development of pupils through good opportunities for independent and collaborative learning and the expression of views in lessons, including on issues of citizenship.

### Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning in English is good. Some teaching is outstanding.

- Teaching meets the needs of all learners well. Strategies to raise the achievement of boys and of pupils capable of higher attainment are implemented well. Pupils' current work does not show the same gap between girls and boys, nor as few pupils achieving higher levels, as in the most recent test and examination results.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. Lessons are well planned, well paced and appropriately challenging, with a good range of strategies and good use of high quality resources that ensure learning.
- Good features of assessment for learning ensure pupils are clear about the achievement of personal, lesson and examination objectives, promote peer and self assessment, and improve learning through careful and thorough marking.
- Work on display in corridors does not reflect well on the department's drive to raise standards.

### Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- The English curriculum is broad, balanced and assures progression. It builds on the experiences of pupils well. Intervention strategies are well targeted. A range of enrichment activities are enjoyed by pupils and extend learning.
- The views of pupils on provision in English are considered seriously and result in changes in practice.
- Plans are well in hand to improve further access to information and communication technology.

## Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management are good.

- The English department self evaluates well and has a clear sense of direction. Priorities for improvement are carefully considered, well targeted and well implemented. Strategies for improving the performance of boys are reducing the achievement gap with girls, and pupils capable of high achievement are challenged well.
- Data, including residual data against target grades for individuals, is used very well to track and analyse the performance of pupils and to target strategies for early intervention. The quality of provision in classrooms is well monitored and assessment for learning is implemented well.

## Provision for poetry

Provision for poetry is satisfactory.

- Pupils like reading and writing poetry and are generally confident in offering a personal response. Some examples of poetry show considerable insight and a good contribution to creativity.
- Teachers have a secure understanding of how to teach poetry in engaging ways. Provision is clearly mapped in schemes of work and poems are well chosen to match the interests and capabilities of pupils. Poetry is used well to improve narrative writing.
- Some pupils can discuss the themes of poems and remember some titles, although they do not recall the names of poets readily.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- continuing to raise levels of achievement of boys and pupils capable of higher attainment, as identified by the school
- improving the quality of work on display in corridors and the presentation of work by some pupils.

## Citizenship

### Achievement and standards

Achievement in citizenship is good.

- Pupils engage well with teachers, each other and with the topics covered. They communicate personal views and opinions effectively. Oral contributions are generally good.
- Skills of enquiry are good. For example, well structured lessons on homelessness and on local cultural festivals enabled pupils to utilise simple but effective research techniques. In other instances, pupils articulated well what they had learnt in relation to crime and disorder, environmental challenges linked to local business expansion, and the work of voluntary organisations.
- Pupils have a clear view of how well they are progressing in citizenship. They have a good understanding of their grade levels and differences in the curriculum between key stages.
- Young people involved in the school council are gaining much from this experience. The council members work well together and have systems in place to consult and communicate with those in their form and year group. Over time, members have developed confidence and skills in decision making, public speaking and finance.
- Lessons led by Year 12 pupils support learning well. In the example seen, younger learners gained a better insight into recycling whilst older pupils learned much from preparing, teaching and evaluating the session.

### Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in citizenship is good.

- Teachers engage young people well. They ensure pupils gain relevant knowledge and skills pertaining to curriculum areas, whilst raising issues which are topical and relevant to citizenship. Whilst emphasis is placed on the 'good' citizen there is less focus on the political aspects of the active and questioning citizen.
- Generally, teachers use techniques and learning strategies to good effect. Account is taken of those who are gifted and talented with teachers subtly directing more demanding questions to this group.
- Assessment is well advanced. Peer and self assessment is developing well, as is expertise in measuring and reporting progress in citizenship. Trend data is now being analysed.
- The school has a growing group of Polish children. Language support is provided but pupils struggle with some concepts.

### Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in citizenship is good.

- Citizenship is delivered through a combination of 'host' subjects, discrete topics at Key Stages 3 and 4, cross curricular themes and citizenship weeks or days. Pupils understand this structure. Departments have a good level of ownership of citizenship and are

increasingly confident in mapping and applying citizenship objectives. An emphasis on speaking, listening and discussion works well but written work is less well developed.

- Links and networks function well. The citizenship day on 'our community' involved external agencies and enabled all subjects to tailor-make workshop sessions.
- Work on display is attractive and plentiful, featuring topics well.

## Leadership and management of citizenship

Leadership and management are good.

- The senior management team supports the subject well and rightly considers the citizenship programme a major contributor to the overall school ethos.
- Subject leadership is very good and capacity to improve further is good. The citizenship co-ordinator has embedded the subject well over a relatively short period and provides non-specialist staff with good support. Subject schemes of work identify citizenship elements and there are firm plans to review these in the light of experience. Monitoring procedures have had a positive impact on standards and the views of students and teachers on many aspects of citizenship are actively sought and acted upon.
- A comprehensive subject self assessment identifies appropriate priorities for further improvement but citizenship does not feature sufficiently in whole school development planning.

## Provision for teaching and learning about Britain's diversity

- The school draws very well upon the ethnic diversity of the locality, its catholicity and its own diverse school population, and social issues are considered from a moral perspective. News items from the area are used to good effect within the curriculum as are local religious and cultural events.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- placing more emphasis on developing the skills of the active and questioning citizen
- using writing more effectively to help consolidate learning
- reporting more fully on standards, progress and targets in citizenship within whole school development plans.

## Inclusion

Inclusion in English and citizenship is good.

- Pupils enjoy English and citizenship and work meets the needs of all learners well.
- Well planned and well resourced lessons, alongside well targeted intervention strategies are successfully motivating and engaging all pupils in learning.
- The school is mindful of the needs of a growing number of children from eastern European countries. In-class support for pupils with additional needs works well and well targeted interventions support gifted and talented students.

We hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop English and citizenship in the school.

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 and Tony Gallagher  
Her Majesty's Inspectors