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12 June 2007

Ms E Ramsay
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Ramsay

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 11 June 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 and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of three lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Standards in English are average overall and the achievement of the pupils is satisfactory.

- Children enter the school with standards in literacy and communication which are generally below national expectations. They make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage, but standards remain below national expectations.

- By the end of Year 2, standards in reading are in line with the national average, but those in writing remain below average.
- In Key Stage 2, the pupils make satisfactory progress overall, attaining standards in national tests that are in line with the national average, although standards in writing remain below standards in reading.
- Standards in speaking and listening are average and have recently improved following effective work in the school to focus on them.
- English makes a satisfactory contribution to the pupils' personal development and well-being. They enjoy English, behave well and work purposefully in lessons.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Lessons are well planned to ensure that pupils learn the basic skills in English.
- Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to develop their skills in speaking and listening.
- Teachers use a good range of questioning skills to probe and extend the pupils' understanding.
- Lessons are planned to suit the individual needs of the pupils and classroom assistants have a positive impact on learning.
- Although marking is regular and satisfactory, it does not always relate to the learning objectives for the lessons and sometimes it does not make clear what the pupils should do in their future work to improve their standards.
- Targets are displayed in classrooms but they are not referred to sufficiently to ensure that the pupils understand them or bear them in mind when working.
- Writing tasks do not always pay sufficient attention to audience and purpose and do not always challenge and stretch the pupils.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- The curriculum meets statutory requirements and caters satisfactorily for the full range of learners.
- There is sufficient provision for reading, writing, speaking and listening.
- There are some opportunities to develop literacy in other subjects, particularly in Key Stage 1.
- Pupils enjoy English in lessons and in other activities such as watching visiting theatre companies.

Leadership and management of English

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory.

- The subject leader has an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the subject.
- Initiatives such as the recent focus on speaking and listening have had a positive impact on standards across the school.
- Results in end of year tests are analysed well to identify trends in achievement in the subject for year groups and individual pupils. More regular and detailed analysis of assessment information would ensure timely improvements to specific areas for development in English.
- Although monitoring and evaluation are accurate and ensure satisfactory progress, procedures are insufficiently regular and focused to have a more significant impact on the quality of lesson planning, teaching and assessment.

Provision for poetry

The provision for poetry is satisfactory.

- Pupils enjoy writing poetry and talk about what they have written with enthusiasm and a sense of achievement. The writing of poetry is well taught.
- The curriculum provides them with sufficient opportunities to write poetry.
- They develop a knowledge of increasingly sophisticated poetic techniques as they get older.
- They talk enthusiastically about individual poems that they have enjoyed reading, but have little knowledge of poets or of the characteristics of different kinds of poetry.
- Schemes of work tend to concentrate more on the writing of poetry than on ensuring that the pupils read a suitably broad range of poetry.

Inclusion

Inclusion is satisfactory.

- The school identifies the needs of individual pupils well and intervention ensures that all groups of pupils make similar progress in their learning in English.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that writing tasks are sufficiently challenging and have a clear audience and purpose

- improving assessment arrangements so that they identify the next steps for learning to the pupils and have a sharper impact on target setting, tracking pupils' progress and lesson planning
- making monitoring and evaluation more regular and more clearly focused on particular aspects of provision.

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

Andrew Harrett
Her Majesty's Inspector