

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr A Calverley
Headteacher
Park Grove Primary School
Park Grove
York
YO31 8LG

Dear Mr Calverley

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 four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be satisfactory, with several good features in provision.

Achievement and standards

Pupils make satisfactory progress and reach above average standards in English.

- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are consistently above average. In 2006, both boys and girls reached above average results in national tests. Results in Key Stage 2 in 2006 were significantly above average for pupils achieving Level 5+ for English.
- Taking account of contextual factors, progress in English is at least satisfactory. At Key Stage 2, boys' progress was lower than the national comparator in 2006, but the gender gap has been reduced in younger year groups.

- The youngest pupils compose their own writing and make good progress in planning and considering their choice of words through Key Stage 1. Older pupils adapt their style to suit different writing purposes, some with striking confidence. They usually take care with connecting ideas coherently and presenting writing clearly, but these features do not develop swiftly for a minority.
- Speaking and listening are notably good, and reading shows solid strengths: for example, pupils in Year 2, and some in Year 1, were able to draw out inferences about character through discussing shared reading, and these skills were consolidated well in Key Stage 2 lessons.
- Pupils enjoy many aspects of English, including the extra curricular opportunities. The subject makes a good contribution to their personal development, particularly by developing good teamwork and communication skills.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Teaching is better than historic data would suggest, on the basis of observation, pupil interviews and work scrutiny. In the lessons seen, teachers explained their high expectations clearly, though sometimes pupils needed more help to understand the success criteria. Lessons had good pace and variety. Teachers made effective use of active approaches which give pupils responsibility and motivate them to work hard.
- Pupils are given time to think and to practise new skills, for example, through discussing before they write.
- With good help from teaching assistants, teachers ensure all pupils are fully involved in lessons and build on solid foundations to make the expected progress. Relationships in the classroom are good and adults are skilful in getting the best out of all their pupils.
- Teachers monitor their pupils' progress carefully. Work is regularly marked, though comments do not consistently help all pupils to do better.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum for English is good.

- Pupils are introduced to a broad mixture of reading and different purposes for writing. They have regular opportunities for speaking and listening, drama, understanding the media and using information and communication technology in English.
- The curriculum for English is being reviewed to make effective links with other areas and reflect current national developments. Themes and texts are well chosen to engage a wide range of interests, including boys'.

- All pupils get involved in frequent exciting arts events and many enjoy extra activities or follow interests related to English. Pupils enjoy their opportunities to meet authors of various kinds and would appreciate more.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

- The school's leadership team, including the literacy coordinator, has a good understanding of standards, achievement and provision in English.
- Data have been used well in an honest self evaluation, and this has led to a purposeful plan for improving achievement. The plan includes some challenging goals, though reporting is insufficiently focussed on outcomes.
- Assessments of pupils' progress are carefully moderated and tracked; weak progress is investigated and followed up.
- Professional development has contributed well to the staff's shared sense of direction for raising achievement in English. The subject leader is well informed about developments in the subject and has effectively supported the introduction of appropriate strategies across the school. Monitoring this year has been focussed on teachers' use of questioning and has led to individual feedback to staff, though not to a report of conclusions. More remains to be done to ensure that pupils understand success criteria and the feedback given by marking, so that they make swifter progress.

Provision for poetry

Provision for poetry is satisfactory.

- Poetry is built securely into schemes of work and pupils encounter poems frequently at both key stages. They have ample opportunities to read, perform and explore them. Pupils often emulate a stylistic feature or a form, and sometimes show distinctively individual thought. They have occasionally written thoughtfully about a poem, too.
- Poetry is plentifully represented in the school's book collections and pupils' effectively displayed work.
- Pupils study a typical range of poetry which becomes progressively more challenging as pupils grow more mature, but is rarely at the highest level of challenge. Pupils remember and talked enthusiastically about their favourite forms and poems – particularly nonsense poems - though they are less familiar with individual poets.

Inclusion

The inclusion of pupils in English is satisfactory.

- Early identification and appropriate intervention and support ensure that those with more serious learning difficulties and disabilities make at least the expected progress. In the lessons seen, teaching assistants were well guided to make an effective contribution to this.
- Appropriate efforts are being made to equalise opportunity and engagement, as boys have to date achieved less well than girls in Key Stage 2 tests. Monitoring is effective in identifying a small minority who make slower progress in Key Stage 2, and interventions are provided, but the impact of intervention has not been fully evaluated.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising achievement, particularly for boys
- improving the effectiveness of feedback given through marking and the way success criteria are shared
- evaluating the impact of new approaches and interventions on outcomes for 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

Susan Bowles
Her Majesty's Inspector