

15 October 2007

Mr Adam Barber
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Dear Mr Barber

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 24 September 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: independent learning in English. 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 good.

Achievement and standards

Standards in English are well above average and the achievement of the pupils is good.

- Pupils enter the school with above average standards in English and make good progress in their learning. Standards in English have been well above average over time. In the National Curriculum tests in 2007, standards were above average in English and were higher in reading than in writing, with fewer pupils attaining Level 5 than in previous years. Standards observed in lessons during the visit in reading, writing and speaking and listening were above average.
- Pupils enjoy English and speak enthusiastically about the wide range of activities provided by the school. They are well motivated, keen to do well, and respond positively to the subject.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning in English is good.

- Lesson planning is good and is often imaginative, using an excellent range of stimuli to enthuse the pupils and provide appropriate contexts for learning.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and their explanations are clear and understood well by the pupils.
- Pupils respond well to the good quality of the teaching, working with focus and enthusiasm.
- Work is marked regularly and consistently, clearly pointing out what the children have achieved.
- However, marking does not always point out the next steps for learning with sufficient precision to provide clear direction for developing the higher skills in writing.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- The curriculum meets statutory requirements and addresses the needs of all learners well.
- It provides ample opportunities to practise and reinforce literacy skills in topics and other subjects across the curriculum.
- It is enriched and enhanced by an impressive range of extracurricular activities, including a popular drama club and visits to the school by a professional theatre company which the pupils greatly appreciate.
- The curriculum makes full use of well established links with the local community and other educational institutions.
- Careful curriculum planning ensures that English contributes well to the children's cultural development.

Leadership and management of English

The quality of the leadership and management of English is good:

- The newly appointed coordinator has a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the subject.
- Team work and collaboration are well established in English.
- Assessment data are used effectively to monitor the progress of the pupils and improve provision.
- The impact of monitoring, evaluation and planning for improvement is good, but a clearer programme of monitoring and evaluation would further enhance the overall effectiveness.

Independent learning in English

Independent learning in English is outstanding.

- Pupils are enthusiastic and independent readers, who choose their own books well and discuss them with confidence and understanding.
- Homework contributes to independent learning well by encouraging research techniques.
- Pupils speak enthusiastically about their independent learning in writing stories, but this is not so well developed in other forms of writing.
- A good range of oral work and drama in lessons encourages independent thinking and confidence well.
- The pupils make a real contribution to curriculum planning, establishing the key questions that they would like to explore in new topics and suggesting how they would like to arrange the learning activities.

Inclusion

Inclusion in English is good.

- The school has a strong and explicit ethos of inclusion which is reflected in the provision in English.
- Intervention for pupils with specific learning difficulties and disabilities is carefully targeted and regularly reviewed to ensure that pupils make the same good progress whatever their needs or circumstances.
- Specialist staff are well deployed to cater for the needs of individuals and groups.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving the pupils' progress in developing the higher skills in writing
- establishing a detailed programme of monitoring and evaluation of the 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

Andrew Harrett
Her Majesty's Inspector