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Mr David Pryor  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Pryor

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 26 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 are well above average. Pupils' achievement is good overall although progress in the national tests at Key Stage 2 is satisfactory.

- Standards in English are consistently well above average at both key stages. These high standards were maintained in 2007 where the unvalidated results show that nearly all pupils achieved the expected standards in the Key Stage 2 tests and almost half exceeded them. However, standards are not as high as in mathematics
- The school argues that achievement in English is good. The contextual value added data does not support this view, suggesting that progress across Key Stage 2, as measured by national tests, is satisfactory. Nevertheless, there is evidence that some pupils, especially the most able, do achieve well. In addition, pupils make good progress in

speaking and listening, an aspect of English not assessed in the national tests.

- Pupils' attitudes towards English are very positive and behaviour in lessons was consistently good. English makes a positive contribution to pupils' personal and social development and helps pupils with their self confidence and communication skills.

### Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- The older pupils spoke positively during the inspection about lessons in English, particularly where there was challenge and variety in learning.
- Pupils are highly committed to learning. They are very keen to do well and enjoy challenging work. Many of them relish homework. Their mature attitudes and high level of learning skills help them to make good progress overall.
- Lessons observed showed good relationships and positive pupil involvement. Some of the activities chosen were engaging and there was good use of stimulating resources. However, learning objectives did not always help in promoting pupils' progress or enabling them to review how well they had done.
- In discussion, older pupils were not very clear about ways of improving their work in English. This reflects the fact that marking does not always identify the next steps in learning and the school does not set curricular targets to guide pupils. However, pupils are increasingly being encouraged to review their own work against specific criteria.

### Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is good.

- The particular strength of the curriculum in English is that it retains breadth and captures pupils' interest. Provision does not concentrate excessively on preparing pupils for tests. For instance, the school makes use of a part-time specialist drama teacher to work with all classes and this makes a good contribution to language and personal development.
- Provision for reading is good and this lead to high standards. The school supports pupils' independent reading well and makes good use of parental support, for instance in listening to pupils read aloud and through a book club run by a parent.
- The curriculum is well matched to the needs of the most able pupils.
- ICT is well integrated into the curriculum with regular time for all pupils to work with support in the specialist suite.

## Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

- The school's leaders take credit for high standards, a lively curriculum and a positive ethos for learning.
- You share responsibility for English with a senior colleague working in Key Stage 1. This shared responsibility has left gaps in subject management. For instance, there is no subject improvement plan and the school improvement plan does not give clear direction to work in English. It is not clear who is expected to take an over-sight of the subject and who draws on the full range of evidence to identify areas for development. The school recognises these gaps and has identified improvement in the subject leader's involvement in monitoring as a whole school priority.
- Recent changes have enabled the current subject leader to attend training and disseminate issues to colleagues. Plans for implementing changes following revisions to the Literacy Framework are good.
- The school tracks progress systematically, especially through the use of data charts for all pupils. However, these graphs plot progress against average rates of achievement and do not help the school to measure whether individual pupils are achieving in line with their potential.

## Independent learning in English

Independent learning in English is good.

- The school is successful in helping pupils to become confident and articulate.
- There is an extremely systematic approach to homework for older pupils which provides them with a good range of challenging, independent tasks.
- Drama makes a positive contribution to pupils' development of social skills and the ability to use their initiative.
- The curriculum includes a number of good independent research activities including a Year 4 project on hobbies and the Year 6 transition unit on reading.
- Pupils have their own email password and site which enables them to work at home and transfer it directly to the school. This encourages good practice in work outside school.

## Inclusion

Inclusion in English is good.

- Nearly all pupils achieve at least average standards; this shows that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) often make

good progress. The school has a very positive ethos for learning which supports the work of the LDD pupils.

- The curriculum is inclusive and broad. For instance, all pupils have drama lessons and take part in performance for parents and during assemblies.
- The most able pupils achieve well and are enthused by some interesting and challenging work.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- clarifying and strengthening the role of English subject leader
- improving the quality of feedback to pupils about their work, and
- extending the effectiveness of the school's tracking of pupils' individual achievement 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