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Mrs C Karunaratna
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Dear Mrs Karunaratna

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 27 September 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 satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Standards in English are average. Achievement is satisfactory.

- Pupils make good progress in the Foundation Stage to attain the reading and writing skills expected for their age by the time they enter Year 1.
- Standards in English are average by the end of Key Stage 1 and 2. Results improved in 2007 but targets for the more able pupils were missed and fewer than nationally reached the highest levels in Year 2 and 6.
- Attainment is better in reading than writing. The school has had a focus on developing writing which has resulted in improvements in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels.

- Contextual value added data and the school's tracking information shows that the progress pupils make in English has improved and is satisfactory.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning in English is good.

- Teaching has improved as a result of recent changes so lessons seen and work in books indicates that pupils are now making better progress.
- Lessons are carefully planned and well structured with a good range of varied tasks to actively engage pupils. As a result, they have good attitudes to learning, behave well and enjoy English.
- Typically, the pace of lessons is brisk and pupils have good opportunities to work in a variety of different groupings to develop and explain their ideas, although these are not always fully developed in whole class activities to sufficiently challenge the more able.
- Expectations are clear because learning objectives are shared at the start of lessons and pupils have targets for improvement in English which are reviewed regularly.
- A colour coded system, understood by pupils, is used to mark work and identifies what pupils have done well and what can be improved. Pupils enjoy responding to developmental comments in their books.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- All aspects of English are covered well and there are good opportunities for speaking and listening and extended writing, although pupils say they would like more poetry.
- The library is an attractive, well used learning resource which is enjoyed by pupils. A good range of books, including talking books, is easily accessible.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) makes a significant contribution to the enrichment of English. There is an online school newspaper, pupils use creative writing skills to prepare story boards for animations and the popular Downs FM radio involves pupils in interviewing a range of people.
- Homework is set regularly and useful information is provided to support pupils and parents.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management in English are satisfactory.

- Senior leaders analyse performance data and track the progress pupils make so self evaluation accurately identifies the key strengths and areas for development in English.
- Monitoring by the English subject leaders, including lesson observations, is in place but evaluations lack a sharp focus on the impact of actions on the outcomes for pupils.
- The English development plan identifies appropriate actions for improvement within a clear time scale although success criteria lack specific, measurable outcomes.
- Staff meetings led by subject leaders have effectively developed whole school subject knowledge in English.

Independent learning in English

Provision for independent learning in English is good.

- Pupils enjoy choosing and reading their own books which are carefully organised to offer a wide variety of choice and genre.
- There is a good balance of independent and guided reading and writing and pupils confidently use a dictionary and thesaurus when appropriate.
- Older pupils enjoy helping younger pupils to read which contributes to their confidence and enjoyment of reading.
- Pupils are given good opportunities to develop their research and personal organisation skills through homework and ICT.
- There are good opportunities to develop independence in speaking and listening, reading and writing in the Foundation Stage through role play and carefully planned activities.

Inclusion

Inclusion in English is satisfactory.

- Provision meets the needs of most learners although more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to make good progress.
- Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because their needs are identified early and interventions are timely.
- The library provides a good range of books, including talking books, to meet the needs of all learners
- Teaching assistants work effectively to support pupils in lessons although their involvement during whole class activities is not fully developed.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising standards and achievement in English, particularly writing
- ensuring the more able pupils are provided with sufficient challenge to reach their targets and achieve well
- developing a sharper focus in monitoring and action planning on pupil outcomes.

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

Jackie Krafft
Her Majesty's Inspector