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Mr N Taunt  
Headteacher  
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PO19 3LT

Dear Mr Taunt

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 15 - 16 October 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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of five lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Standards in English are exceptionally high. Achievement is good.

- Data and the school's self assessment indicate that students enter with standards that are above average in English.
- Standards throughout the school are consistently high and challenging targets are met. In GCSE examinations in 2007 there was a 13.5% increase on the previous year in the percentage of students attaining an A grade.
- All students who take an A2 English qualification achieve an award and the percentage of AS passes, including at the highest levels, is well above national levels.

- Contextual value added data, progress in lessons and work seen shows that all students make good progress and achieve well, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. This is because their progress is tracked systematically and additional support targeted effectively when needed.
- Standards in speaking and listening are exceptionally high and students of all abilities are confident and articulate. Opportunities to develop these skills are given a high priority and are carefully planned.

### Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning in English is good.

- Students enjoy English and respond well because teachers have thorough subject knowledge, model the use of language well and relationships are excellent.
- Lessons are carefully planned, build effectively on prior learning and provide good opportunities for students to discuss their ideas. However, the grouping of students for different tasks does not always provide consistent challenge or pace for all students.
- Expectations are high, assessments are systematic and there is regular use of level descriptors so students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- There are good opportunities for students to engage in self and peer assessment. Work is carefully annotated and marking contains some useful developmental comments which help students to achieve their targets.

### Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- English is popular and students say they particularly enjoy opportunities to be creative, to discuss and debate, use role play and study a wide range of topics and texts.
- There is a good variety of resources available to meet the needs of all students and the library is particularly valued and well used.
- Homework is set regularly and is linked well to the units of study.
- Some units of work are well supported by materials on the school's computer network but the use of information and communication technology to support English is not yet fully developed.
- There is a varied and interesting range of extra curricular and enrichment activities, both in creative writing and particularly linked to the development of reading such as the Year 13 Booker discussion group, guest speakers, visiting authors and reading challenges, all of which contribute significantly to the students' enjoyment of English.

## Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management in English are good.

- Self evaluation of English is based on careful analysis of data and pupil tracking information so it is accurate and identifies the relevant priorities for improvement.
- A clear vision for the department is communicated effectively through strong and well informed leadership. Roles and responsibilities within the department are clear.
- There is a systematic approach to monitoring and department review and a clear plan for improvement although the evaluation of actions is not always sharply focused on their impact on outcomes for students.
- Effective leadership is evident in the good achievement, confidence and enjoyment of students.

## Independent learning in English

Provision for independent learning in English is good.

- Students are given good opportunities to choose and read their own books. They say they are encouraged to read a wide range of texts beyond set texts to become "diverse readers".
- There is a strong focus on developing independence and the use of Edward de Bono's "Thinking Hats" was observed being used well to support this during lessons.
- There is good freedom of choice for A level students in the identification of coursework and texts.
- Helpful study guides linked to units of work with clear assessment criteria support good peer and self assessment opportunities.
- Students have good opportunities to discuss their ideas and choose their own topics to research and present.

## Inclusion

Inclusion in English is good.

- Provision in English meets the needs of all students well so they make good progress, are actively engaged and enjoy their lessons.
- Expectations are clear and there is a systematic approach to target setting and review which is understood and valued by all students.
- Students with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve well because their needs are identified early and met effectively in lessons and through additional support.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring group work is appropriate and provides sufficient pace and challenge for all students
- sharply focusing the evaluation of actions for improvement on outcomes for students.

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