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Mr C Wilkins
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Dear Mr Wilkins

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 5 October to look at work in English. Please also pass on my thanks to the pupils who gave up part of their lunch hour to meet me.

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 four lessons. In addition, a number of other part lessons were seen. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Standards in English are above average and achievement is good.

- Pupils start school with standards in communication, language and literacy which are below expectations. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are above average in reading and average in writing. Standards are above average at the end of Year 6. There is an improving trend to standards.
- Over their time in school, pupils make good progress and achieve well. For the last two years, girls have outperformed boys and girls' performance is exceptionally high. The school is working effectively to narrow this gap, reflected in school data.
- Pupils enjoy English and display very good attitudes to the subject in lessons. English makes a very significant contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- Children have speaking and listening skills that are below expectations when they join Reception. They gain considerably in confidence and develop good skills in this aspect. For example, older pupils have the confidence to give extended and complex replies to questions, make suggestions or ask questions.
- Standards in writing in Key Stage 2 are above average. Older pupils write at length, fluently, accurately and neatly; they show a good range of imaginative vocabulary and know how to create a specific effect such as heightening tension. Above all their writing has a zest that stems from their enjoyment of writing.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning in English is good.

- There has been good improvement in teaching of English since the last inspection. Pupils make good progress and show good attitudes to their work because of the effectiveness of teaching.
- Lessons have a good mixture of opportunities for reading, writing and discussion. Units of work and lessons are carefully planned with clear objectives and appropriate inbuilt support and challenge for individual pupils.
- Teachers create an effective working ethos that stems from their very good relationships with the pupils and there is a strong sense of partnership with older pupils. The work that the school has undertaken on visual literacy and the associated creative approaches has extended teachers' skills. The next step is to develop even greater staff confidence and expertise in these approaches. Teachers make effective use of interactive white boards.
- Marking is both supportive and informative. Pupils know what they have to do in order to improve and are positively encouraged to develop their own editorial and proofing skills. The school makes effective use of assessment to track all pupils' progress carefully.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is good.

- The school makes good use of practising authors: for example a lyricist worked with older pupils just before my visit.
- Staff are committed to using whole texts rather than extracts and poetry is supported well by the annual poetry events. The work on visual literacy has meant that the school has made an increasing use of drama and media approaches. The school productions play a significant role in developing pupils' confidence.

- There are good opportunities for pupils to use and develop their skills within other subjects of the curriculum. Writing to 'prisoners of conscience' and the impact of receiving replies from Camp Delta contributed to pupils' spiritual development.
- The school uses a good range of fiction and other materials from other cultures. The current satisfactory provision for information and communication technology is to be enhanced further by the planned provision of the ICT suite in four months time.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management in English are good.

- The quality of leadership is good. Self-evaluation about work in English and the quality of teaching is accurate and there is good and detailed analysis of performance data. The effect of the good leadership is seen in the improving trend in standards, the reduction of the gap between girls' and boys' performance and the overall improvements since the last inspection.
- The school improvement plan identifies appropriate improvements in English. These include monitoring of 'planning into practice for the Primary Literacy Strategy', refining the assessment and tracking systems, and a continuing focus on the teaching of writing.

Independent learning in English

Independent learning in English is good.

- The school encourages independent learning well in English. Pupils enjoy English and are confident. Current work in Year 5 and Year 6 on genre allows choice and in the lessons seen pupils were being taught specific skills through peer assessment to support their independent writing.
- Pupils are effectively encouraged to read independently. Homework tasks such as carrying out subject specific surveys or investigations provide good opportunities for independent research. Group work, for example looking at coastal erosion in geography or associated with their history topic, provides good opportunities to use their English skills within a context and foster their independence.
- Drama and media work provide further contexts for fostering independent learning.
- Pupils have recursive opportunities to take responsibility, show initiative and demonstrate their skills in school, including the school council, showing parents around the school or reading in assembly.

Inclusion

Inclusion in English is good.

- Pupils with learning difficulties and or disabilities (LDD) make good progress against their targets because of the quality of provision.
- Higher attaining pupils are effectively challenged. The school has identified individual pupils who are particularly able in English and is actively seeking additional levels of challenge for these pupils. For example, one pupil presented a very carefully presented case to the governing body for girls to wear trousers.
- The progress of all pupils is tracked and evaluated very carefully.
- The school prepares pupils for living in a diverse society through its values, exploration of other cultures and faiths and by projects such as exploring individual family trees to identify the diversity of our culture.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- continuing to work on the areas for English identified within the school improvement plan, and
- developing further staff's confidence and expertise in using the creative approaches currently adopted in the school for the teaching of writing.

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

Roderick Passant
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