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Mrs Hazel Henson  
Headteacher  
Pilsley Church of England Primary School  
Pilsley Village  
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Derbyshire  
DE45 1UF

Dear Mrs Henson

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19 October 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 four lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good and standards are average.

- Attainment on entry is below average with one third of pupils having learning difficulties and disabilities. By the time that the pupils leave school their standards are average.
- Key Stage 1 results in 2007 were slightly above average. Key Stage 2 English results were above the national average in reading but below in writing.
- Standards in pupils' speaking, listening and reading skills are above expectations. Writing skills have been highlighted by the school as an area for improvement.
- All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, achieve as well as their peers.

## Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning in English is good.

- Teachers have made the best of the school's unique circumstances. The relatively small number of pupils means that each pupil gets very good one to one support. The local area's outstanding natural beauty has been used effectively to encourage pupils to write creatively and independently.
- Teaching seen was consistently good because of the effective planning, clear expectations, variety of activities and a strong focus on improving basic skills.
- Pupils speak well of their English lessons which they clearly enjoy. They are keen on highlighting independent creative writing as a particular strength in English teaching and learning.
- Assessment is formative and allows pupils to improve their work further because teachers tell them what they need to do to improve it.

## Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- Resources have been thoroughly updated in the last year with the result that boys are reading more for pleasure than they did before. ICT resources have also been improved so that access to computers is wider with pupils benefiting from many opportunities for using them.
- The literacy curriculum caters for the pupils' differing abilities. Pupils speak well of their enjoyment of English lessons.
- Curriculum planning is structured with the improvement of standards built in. For example, reading has already improved and writing is currently the school's focus for improvement.
- Where opportunities arise for celebrating cultural diversity the school uses them well to widen the pupils' experiences.

## Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management in English are good.

- Reading standards have improved over the last year because of the efforts by the subject leader and her colleagues to widen choices, collaborate on ensuring variety in learning opportunities and produce detailed planning.
- Senior leaders support the literacy co-ordinator in monitoring teaching and learning so that practice is constantly being improved.
- Data are used well for tracking pupils' progress. Outcomes of tracking are used in planning lessons and putting together schemes of work.
- The school's evaluation of the subject area is accurate.

## Independent learning in English

Provision for independent learning is good.

- Pupils speak well of opportunities to learn independently. They clearly enjoy 'making up stories' as well as using ICT both of which activities enhance their independent learning skills.
- Pupils choose their own reading, read for pleasure and are strongly encouraged to talk about their reading including making public presentations to whole groups who then evaluate their work. As a result, over the last year, reading standards have improved significantly.

## Inclusion

Inclusion in English is good.

- All pupils, including the increasing number with learning difficulties and disabilities, are included in the school's work in English. Consequently, all pupils make good progress.
- Lessons seen included opportunities for working independently such as writing a short story, writing a poem, presenting written pieces to the rest of the class and evaluating each other's performances.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving writing skills across the school.

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

Faysal Mikdadi  
Additional Inspector