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Ms C Brett
Headteacher
St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School
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Dear Ms Brett

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 21 January 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 outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Standards in English are exceptionally high. Achievement is outstanding.

- Pupils make excellent progress in the Foundation Stage, particularly in their knowledge of sounds. They enter Year 1 with well developed early reading and writing skills.
- Standards are exceptionally high in reading and writing by the end of Year 2. In 2007 more pupils attained the highest levels in reading than nationally.
- All groups of pupils make excellent progress consistently to attain standards that are exceptionally high by the end of Year 6. Significantly more pupils than nationally reached the highest levels in 2007 and challenging targets were exceeded.

- High priority is given to developing all aspects of English. Through its own detailed data analysis, the school has identified improving boys' writing skills and narrowing the gap between reading and writing as areas of particular focus.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning of English is outstanding.

- Detailed and systematic use of assessment information ensures that consistently high quality lessons are carefully planned to meet the needs of all pupils extremely well.
- Lessons are well structured, expectations are clear and relationships are excellent. As a result, pupils are eager to learn and have very positive attitudes to English.
- Pupils are given excellent opportunities to be actively involved in their learning and work productively in groups and independently. They respond enthusiastically to good questioning which challenges them to explain and develop their ideas.
- Pupils know how well they are doing through well established target setting, effective ongoing feedback in lessons and regular opportunities for self and peer assessment.
- Marking consistently informs pupils about what they do well and how they can improve further. Pupils say they value the time they are given to act on these comments.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in English is outstanding.

- The curriculum covers all aspects of English very effectively. It is carefully planned to be practical, relevant and build on the pupils' prior learning. As a result, they enjoy English and make excellent progress.
- In the Foundation Stage there is discrete daily teaching of phonics and a sharp focus on the development of early reading and writing skills through varied, practical and multi sensory activities.
- The school makes very good links with other subjects and good use of local events, such as the school flood or the fallen tree, so pupils have excellent opportunities to apply and develop their reading and writing skills.
- Oracy is promoted effectively, particularly through the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to prepare presentations and pod casts.
- Pupils speak enthusiastically about the wide range of extension and enrichment activities such as book weeks, theatre visits and the writing competitions they have taken part in. There are no current plans to make links with the National Year of Reading. Particularly good use is

made of parental skills and expertise such as in the development of the school newspaper.

- The school provides a literacy-rich environment with well chosen resources and interesting displays which are used very well to reinforce learning.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management of English are outstanding.

- Self evaluation is accurate and full of insight. It is well informed by detailed and searching analysis of performance data and monitoring information to inform strategic planning for improvement.
- There is a clear sense of direction and continued drive for improvement in this high achieving school. Pupils and staff understand the current focus on improving writing. Systematic pupil tracking and performance management is used effectively to hold staff to account for improvement.
- There is excellent support for the new subject leader through a carefully planned system of joint leadership and coaching to ensure consistency.
- The impact of outstanding leadership is evident in consistently high standards and achievement.

Independent learning in English

Provision for independent learning in English is good.

- Pupils are given good guidance on how to choose their own reading books and are encouraged to read from a range of genres through the termly 'Good Read', and the local library's summer readathon. Pupils also value the opportunities they have to influence which new books are purchased.
- The school seeks and acts on pupils' views regularly. As a result pupils have regular opportunities to write about topics of their choice in a style of their choice.
- Independent learning is a feature of the schemes of work for English and homework activities. They encourage pupils to use their research and ICT to extend and apply what they have learned in school.
- Pupils in Year 6 enjoy writing their own plays in English to develop their independence although the use of drama in lessons in other year groups is not as well developed.

Inclusion

Inclusion in English is outstanding.

- Provision for all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as a second language, is excellent so they make outstanding progress.
- Pupils' needs are identified early and addressed quickly through effectively differentiated tasks, good targeted support and individual education plans, so there is little need to use specific English intervention programmes to address underachievement.
- Where intervention programmes are used they are carefully modified to address the specific needs of the pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- seeking opportunities to promote reading and writing further through the National Year of Reading
- extending the use of drama in lessons to develop independence 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

Jackie Krafft
Her Majesty's Inspector