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Mrs R Wilmot
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Wilmot

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 21 January 2008 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 satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Standards are broadly average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

- Results from the Key Stage 2 national tests are broadly in line with average. However, there has been a steady rise in attainment over the past five years and this rate of improvement is above average.
- Standards of writing have improved and were above average for Year 6 pupils in 2007.
- Boys perform as well as girls in the national tests; this is better than the national picture.
- The school considers that pupils make good progress across Key Stage 2. However, the performance data suggest that achievement is

satisfactory overall. This reflects the contextual value added figures, as well as Fisher Family Trust data and the LA judgement. Moreover, achievement has not improved in line with attainment over the past three years.

- Progress in lessons observed was good, reflecting a good quality of teaching and positive pupil attitudes.
- Pupils enjoy English, especially where activities are inter-active. Their behaviour was very good during the inspection. English makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development; the focus on speaking and listening has produced good standards of oracy for many pupils.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Lessons observed were good overall. This was confirmed by discussions with pupils and evidence from the work sample.
- Relationships in lessons were good. Pupils told me that teachers "made learning fun" in English lessons and this was largely borne out by the inspection. Topics were well chosen to engage pupils' interest and teachers made good use of lively activities.
- There is a good emphasis on speaking and listening activities including talk partners and other collaborative work, such as the pair work on information retrieval in Year 4.
- In lessons observed, some opportunities were missed to model aspects of writing in order to improve pupils' understanding of the task.
- Teachers have a consistent policy on setting group targets for literacy. There is also evidence of the school's new policy on marking, with consistent approaches across classes and up-to-date, positive comments on pupils' work. However, marking does not always provide good feedback to pupils on how to improve their work or how they are progressing in relation to their targets.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is good.

- Pupils respond positively to the curriculum and enjoy lessons in English. Teachers draw on a wide range of topics, including some from other areas of the curriculum, in order to make writing tasks meaningful for pupils.
- There is a good focus at present on speaking and listening. Pupils also told me that drama was frequently used in certain classes. This has had a positive impact on their self confidence and communication skills.
- The curriculum in English is enhanced by occasional visits from writers and poets; parents are also invited into school to talk to classes.

- Innovative aspects of the curriculum include the thematic weeks such as 'Greek Week' in Year 4 which are much enjoyed by pupils.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management are good in English.

- The subject coordinator provides good leadership in English. She is energetic and enthusiastic, as well as being an effective classroom practitioner. She is in a good position to identify and share good practice.
- Subject development plans show that there is a clear sense of direction to English work. The coordinator has identified a wide range of areas for further improvement although the link with standards and achievement should be strengthened in subject plans.
- The subject leader, with your support, is involved in lesson observations which enable her to monitor the quality of teaching. Areas for development are clearly identified.
- The school has introduced a more systematic approach to tracking individual performance. As the school has a different view of achievement from that contained in contextual value added data, it needs to make better use of the range of performance data available in order to evaluate the progress of all pupils more effectively.

Independent learning in English

Independent learning in English is good.

- The school has made changes to its approach to pupils' independent learning in the light of the most recent institutional inspection. This includes better provision for homework with more focus on pupils finding things out and then sharing this with the class back in school.
- Good use is made of thematic weeks. For instance, pupils in Year 6 talked about their favourite lessons and were given opportunities to plan and teach a lesson to the rest of the class.
- Drama and pair or group activities give pupils opportunities to make decisions and work cooperatively with others.
- Pupils spoke about lessons where they had been able to exercise choice. This was seen in the Year 4 lesson observed where pupils chose their own animal topic to research.
- Pupils are encouraged to extend their independent reading out of school; this is monitored by the school although opportunities are missed at present to use these records to inspire, support and challenge independent reading still further.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- making better use of the full range of performance data in order to monitor more closely pupils' achievement, and
- improving the quality of feedback given to pupils through marking and curricular targets setting.

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

Philip Jarrett HMI
Subject Adviser for English