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Mrs C Byamukama
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Byamukama

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 29-30 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: provision for independent learning. 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 six lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Standards are well above average and achievement is outstanding overall.

- Attainment on entry to the school is average. Pupils make good progress and a significant number make very good progress. Standards in all aspects of English are consistently well above average at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, and high at post-16. Increasing numbers of pupils are achieving higher grades at GCSE due to well targeted action.
- In 2007, a relative weakness identified in writing at the end of Key Stage 3 is being addressed very well. Improving performance at A/A* grades, currently above national results in Language and in line with national figures in Literature, is a department priority.
- Pupils are articulate and highly confident speakers and respectful, careful, reflective and critical listeners. They are considered and

analytical readers, who read for enjoyment, and they convey complex ideas in interesting and thoughtful writing that is presented very well.

- Provision for personal development is outstanding. Pupils have extensive opportunities for pair, group and independent work and engagement with texts shows considerable maturity. They are supported very well to present and challenge ideas and attitudes and do so from well considered and evidenced arguments.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding overall.

- Teaching meets the differing needs of pupils very well. Expectations are high and very good subject knowledge is demonstrated in very well planned, varied, stimulating and challenging lessons delivered with expertise and enthusiasm.
- Skills are taught carefully and systematically to secure progression and good questioning and discussion probes and extends learning. Pupils are very well prepared for tests, examinations and the demands of English at post-16.
- Creativity is encouraged very strongly and developed very well. ICT is used judiciously and well, despite difficulties with availability.
- Pupils are motivated well, enjoy learning and work hard. Excellent use of pair and group work and widespread sharing of outstanding writing makes very good use of pupils themselves as a resource for learning.
- Assessment, including careful, highly supportive and accurate marking, individual targets, self-review and oral feedback from teachers and other pupils is very effective in raising achievement. Pupils are very clear about what they have achieved, what they need to achieve and how to achieve it.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- The English curriculum is very well planned for balance, breadth and progression. Skills are systematically mapped, drama and media are integrated very well and a sound range of enrichment activities extends learning. Very well chosen resources stimulate and motivate pupils to achieve highly.
- The department makes a particularly significant contribution to pupils' social and cultural development through well chosen texts and considerable opportunities to examine contextual, topical and controversial issues.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management are outstanding.

- Highly effective leadership, a comprehensive and accurate understanding of strengths and weaknesses and hard working, expert practitioners secure high standards. The department has a strong and shared sense of direction and an explicit focus on high achievement.
- Monitoring of all aspects of provision is excellent. Performance data are analysed very rigorously, the progress of all pupils is tracked systematically and persistently, and prompt action addresses underachievement.
- Staff manage fragmented accommodation and split groups admirably.

Provision for independent learning

Provision for independent learning is outstanding.

- Pupils are very clear about the considerable and positive impact of English on their learning and development. They are expected to take responsibility for their own learning and are supported to do so very well. Pupils enjoy all aspects of English, gain significantly in confidence and apply what they have been taught effectively.
- Independent reading is promoted very strongly, particularly at Key Stage 3. Pupils are expected to read texts of their own choice and are given good opportunities to talk about these. They are increasingly able to write independently and well across a range of genres as a result of very good support and good opportunities for choice of topic and form.
- Speaking and listening are strengths of provision. Pupils enjoy discussion and presentations, they are very confident in expressing their personal views and frequently raise their own questions and issues in lessons.
- Homework provides very interesting opportunities for individual work and research.

Inclusion

Inclusion is outstanding.

- Pupils of all abilities engage in challenging, accessible tasks and all achieve equally well.
- Highly respectful relationships between pupils and teachers and between pupils themselves, contribute significantly to the very positive ethos for learning.
- Provision for, and the impact of, interventions including from national programmes, teaching assistants in classrooms, differentiated tasks and personalised support are effective in addressing gaps in learning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising standards further by continuing to target writing, and
- improving performance at A*/A grades at GCSE.

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 and Local Learning Skills Council. 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

Rosemary Matthews
Her Majesty's Inspector