

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
F 020 7421 6855
www.ofsted.gov.uk
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr E Delasalle
Headteacher
The Thomas Coram Middle School
Swing Gate Lane
Berkhamsted
Hertfordshire
HP4 2RP

Dear Mr Delasalle

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 07-08 February 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 seven lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be satisfactory with many good features.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are average overall.

- Attainment on entry to the school in Year 5 is broadly average. Some pupils have high attainment.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stages 2 and 3, although more so in reading than in writing. Those receiving additional support, including from intervention programmes, make good progress.
- At Key Stage 2 in 2007, standards were average at Level 4+ and results showed a rising trend. Results fluctuate at Level 5+. In 2007, these were significantly above average at 44%, and 7% above the school's target. However, at both levels 4+ and 5+, girls outperformed

boys in writing by 26%. This is being addressed well and the gap has narrowed from previous years.

- Standards of speaking and listening are good. Pupils speak with confidence and express their views clearly. They listen carefully to their teachers and to others and make good use of what has been said to inform their own contributions.
- The presentation of work is satisfactory overall.
- Provision for personal development is good. Pupils have good opportunities to participate in an active school council and in projects, to take responsibility for initiatives and to support others, for example in Year 8 as volunteer reading buddies for struggling readers at Key Stage 2. Pupils collaborate very well in pairs and groups and communicate with courtesy and respect.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Teachers have secure subject knowledge. Skills are taught systematically and well and good planning for lessons meets the diverse needs of learners. Good questioning and explanations probe and extend learning well.
- Lessons are interesting and challenging. A good range of strategies and well chosen resources, including some very good use of technology, drama techniques and media texts, engage pupils well.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning. They are interested in and enjoy English.
- Opportunities for self and peer assessment are good. Marking is encouraging and supportive with good examples of written feedback to pupils on how to improve their work, but there is some inconsistency across classes.
- Support assistants provide good support for learning.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The curriculum encompasses national requirements, national strategies and local developments well. Cultural provision is sound.
- Careful planning assures progression, including across key stages. The recently introduced two-year accelerated Key Stage 3 curriculum is securely mapped and resourced. Pupils are coping well with the additional challenge and implications for provision at Key Stage 2 are being identified.
- Good opportunities for speaking and listening, good provision for drama, good use of media texts and a good range of enrichment activities, including for gifted and talented pupils, enhance learning.

- The school's policy for literacy across the curriculum reinforces the teaching of literacy well, but its impact has yet to be evaluated fully.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management are good.

- Good leadership, good investment in professional development that has improved teachers' subject knowledge, and productive partnerships with other schools and the local authority have contributed significantly to provision that is now accelerating progress and securing a rise in standards.
- The school has a clear and accurate understanding of strengths and weaknesses and a good grasp of how to improve further. Good progress has been made in English since the institutional inspection of 2006.
- Moderation of writing with other schools is informing provision well and securing consistency of teacher assessment. However, given that writing is a key priority for improvement, there are too few examples of high quality work on display as models to which pupils can aspire.
- All aspects of provision are regularly monitored and action is appropriate and well targeted. Data are used very well to systematically track the progress of pupils and this informs the setting of targets and strategies for support and intervention well.

Provision for independent learning

Provision for independent learning is good.

- The school works hard to develop independence and initiative.
- Pupils gain in confidence and speak openly and well from good opportunities for speaking and listening in collaborative work, oral presentations to their peers and drama activities.
- The Learning Resource Centre, homework, and enrichment and support activities provide good opportunities for pupils to choose, read and share their own books in school.
- Pupils are helped to structure their writing well, with reasonable opportunities to choose topic and form.
- Teachers consistently encourage independent attitudes through pair and group work and in good opportunities for self and peer assessment.
- Independent learning is promoted well through research and homework tasks, and the use of information and communication technology.

Inclusion

Inclusion is good.

- The school is very responsive to the learning needs of individual pupils.
- Good 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 groups, and personalised support are effective in addressing gaps in learning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising standards as identified by the school, ensuring that work on display reflects the priority given to writing
- improving the consistency of formative marking so that all pupils are clear about what to do to develop their writing
- continuing to evaluate the implementation of the two-year accelerated Key Stage 3 curriculum.

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

Rosemary Matthews
Her Majesty's Inspector