

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040  
F 020 7421 6855  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



07 March 2008

Ms A Brackstone  
Acting Headteacher  
St John's C of E Primary School  
Orts Road  
Reading  
RG1 3JN

Dear Ms Brackstone

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 04 March 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 homework. 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 two lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is above average and standards are good.

- Attainment on entry to the school is below average and a substantial number of pupils have poor speaking, listening and literacy skills. Many are early learners of English as an additional language.
- The school works very hard to raise achievement. All groups of pupils achieve equally well and make at least good progress.
- In 2007, standards of reading and writing were broadly average by the end of Key Stage 1, although girls outperformed boys significantly in reading at level 2B. Results at Level 4+ at Key Stage 2 were above average, but results at Level 5 showed a downward trend.
- Standards of speaking and listening are good. Pupils speak with increasing confidence and express themselves well. They listen attentively to their teachers and to each other.

- Good attention to literacy skills enables pupils to make good progress in subjects across the curriculum and work is presented to a high standard.
- English makes an outstanding contribution to the personal development of pupils. Collaborative work develops speaking and listening skills very well; the drama club is particularly successful and the school council functions very effectively.

### Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Good planning and structured teaching meets individual needs well and provide systematic support for learning.
- Lessons are interesting, varied and challenging. Teachers have high expectations for all pupils, good subject knowledge, and a good range of strategies that engages learners well and promotes independent learning very strongly.
- Resources are chosen carefully and used very well, classrooms provide a stimulating and interactive environment for literacy and 'challenge corners' are enjoyed by pupils.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and enjoy English. They are well motivated, confidently engaged and work hard.
- Pupils are clear about their personal targets and play an increasing role in assessing their own learning. Careful and thorough marking gives good feedback and a good understanding of how to improve.
- Competent specialist and support staff provide good support for pupils, including those learning English as an additional language.

### Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The English curriculum is carefully structured, creative, and monitored regularly. It meets the needs of all pupils well and ensures systematic teaching of skills and progression in learning, including the development of vocabulary and accurate spelling. A strong emphasis on speaking and listening develops and reinforces literacy well.
- Cross curricular links are made well, resources from a range of cultures offer a broad experience of English and enrichment activities and challenge days enhance learning.
- Technology is used well to introduce and extend skills, for research and to present and publish work.
- Provision for homework is good. Homework is regular, varied, provides very good opportunities for independent learning and research skills and extends and reinforces learning in school well. On-line provision and the use of email are impressive and successful.

## Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management are good.

- Good leadership and clear policies and procedures are implemented well, securing good provision and contributing to pupils' good progress. Good provision for professional development has assured continuity during significant changes in staffing over the past two years.
- Good analysis of performance data and systematic tracking of progress inform the setting of targets and strategies for support and intervention well.
- Monitoring and evaluation is regular, rigorous and secures improvement. The school has an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses across the subject and a good grasp of how to improve, although the literacy action plan has gaps in the identification of learning outcomes for pupils.

## Inclusion

Inclusion in English is outstanding.

- The school is highly responsive to the needs of individual and vulnerable pupils and celebrates the achievements of all.
- All groups of learners, including able pupils, pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language receive very good support and achieve equally well.
- Interventions, including from trained volunteer readers, are well targeted and delivered, monitored regularly and result in good gains in learning. Parents receive very good support to help their children with homework.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improve standards of reading for boys at Key Stage 1; and
- identify learning outcomes more clearly for pupils in the literacy action plan.

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