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Mr R J Clark
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Dear Mr Clark

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 30 January to look at work in English. Please also pass on my thanks to the pupils who gave up part of their lunch hour to meet me.

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 good.

Achievement and Standards

Standards in English are broadly average and achievement is good.

- Pupils start school with standards in communication, language and literacy which are below expectations. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are above average in reading and just above in writing. Standards are broadly average at the end of Year 6.
- Standards show an improving trend at Key Stage 1 and an improvement in 2007 at Key Stage 2. There has been good progress since the last inspection in the key issue of raising standards at Key Stage 1.

- When viewed over their whole time in school, pupils make good progress and achieve well. The school is raising standards in two main ways: firstly by establishing a firm foundation for younger pupils, which is now being built upon effectively in the lower Key Stage 2; and secondly by using a variety of 'catch-up' programmes with older classes.
- Year 6 pupils make good progress in their lessons but because of gaps in their learning, their progress over time is no better than satisfactory. Targets for 2009 are challenging and there is very effective tracking to ensure that pupils stay on target.
- Children have speaking and listening skills that are below expectations when they join Reception. Whilst they gain in confidence, for example to give extended answers to questions, skills in this aspect remain more limited than in reading and writing
- The phonics programme and the current focus on vocabulary, conjunctions, openings and punctuation (VCOP) has given staff a clear methodology to improve pupils' writing across the school. Older pupils' independent writing is variable.
- Pupils enjoy English and display good attitudes to the subject in lessons. English makes a significant contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning of English is good.

- There has been good improvement in teaching of English since the last inspection. Good learning is underpinned by the quality of the relationships that teachers have established with pupils and as a result, pupils want to do well.
- Teachers showed enthusiasm and skills of positive classroom management. There was good teamwork with teaching assistants who provided effective support to individuals but who were able to spread their influence to others.
- Marking was up-to-date and included a mixture of positive comments and indications of how to improve. Pupils are helped to develop their own editorial and proofing skills
- Teachers are making effective use of other learning contexts, for example in history, to develop writing skills. Interactive white boards are used effectively. Teachers make classrooms rich in language for displays.
- Whilst good practice was seen, there is not yet a consistency of emphasis across classes in, for example, use of targets, differentiated planning or focus on presentation.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is good.

- The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to progress and develop well in their English work. The revised school curriculum is still evolving and developing but English is acting as a catalyst within the new framework. Teachers are exploiting the flexibility of the new curriculum well to provide meaningful contexts for English work.
- Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about the whole texts that they had read in class and quoted examples such as *Matilda*, *Good night Mr Tom* and *Kensuke's Kingdom*. The school uses a good range of poetry, plays and texts carefully mapped to ensure balance, as well as materials from other cultures. The school productions play a significant role in developing pupils' confidence.
- The library is extremely attractive and you are clearly encouraging pupils to make greater use of it. Rolls Royce and the Friends of the School have made donations to encourage pupils' reading within the context of the National Year of Reading which you plan to start in April.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management of English are good.

- The quality of leadership is good. Self-evaluation about work in English and the quality of teaching is accurate and there is good, detailed analysis of performance and school tracking data.
- The effect of the good leadership is seen in the improving trend in standards, and the overall improvements since the last inspection. Whole school initiatives, for example in phonics, guided reading and VCOP, have had a significant impact.

Independent learning in English

Independent learning in English is satisfactory.

- Pupils have opportunities to work independently but older pupils are not yet confident in their skills. Pupils are effectively encouraged to develop their reading skills in order to become independent readers.
- The school is developing meaningful homework tasks – enjoyed by pupils – which provide a good context for independent work such as the Year 3 projects on countries.
- At this stage of the school's development, with a sharp focus on raising standards, work is understandably targeted within a framework of expectations. Speaking and listening and drama are not yet strong aspects of the provision.

Inclusion

Inclusion in English is good.

- Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) make good progress against their targets because of the quality of provision.
- Intervention and support are carefully targeted and monitored. There is tight tracking of pupils' progress to pick up underachievement quickly. There is now early identification of younger pupils with LDD so that the number of pupils progressing into Key Stage 2 with learning difficulties is reduced. A lot of time and effort has gone into effective support for your statemented pupils.
- The school promotes inclusion by using a variety of texts from other cultures.
- Year 6 pupils were very positive about the help received.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising standards in pupils' oral skills and develop staff confidence in encouraging discussion and use of drama within the classroom; and
- sharing existing good practice in teaching to develop greater consistency in planning and use of targets.

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

Roderick Passant
Additional Inspector