

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



06 March 2008

Mr L Spiers
Headteacher
Bradon Forest School
The Peak
Purton
Wiltshire
SN5 4AT

Dear Mr Spiers

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 03 - 04 March 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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of six lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Standards in English are above average and the achievement of the students is good.

- Standards rose in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2007 and were above average.
- The students made good progress in their learning in Year 9 and achievement was good. Although the proportion of the students who achieved the highest levels in the national tests rose in 2007, not all those who were capable of achieving the highest grades did so.
- Standards are above average at Key Stage 4 in GCSE English and GCSE English Literature. The proportion of the students attaining good GCSE grades is above average, as is the proportion attaining the highest

grades. The students make good progress from their starting points at the end of Key Stage 3.

- Standards and achievement observed in lessons and exercise books during the inspection were similar to the results in examinations in 2007.
- Standards in speaking and listening are above average and the students make good progress throughout the school.
- English makes a good contribution to the personal development of the students. They appreciate the opportunities provided by the department and the school library to work with visiting authors and theatre companies and their attitudes to learning are good.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of the teaching and learning of English is good.

- Lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives. They are brisk and purposeful, providing the students with appropriate challenge
- A good variety of questioning techniques probes and extends the students' understanding and helps them to reflect on their learning well.
- A good variety of paired, group and whole class activities engages the students in their learning.
- Occasionally the good quality of teaching and learning is marred by lessons lacking sufficient challenge and pace, which has an adverse impact on the students' rate of learning. However, such instances are rare.
- The assessment of assignments completed at the end of units of work is thorough and provides accurate and detailed information about what the students have achieved and precise advice about how to improve their standards. Students report that they find these assessments helpful.
- The present system for delivering the units of work does not enable the department to assess particular skills across year groups in Key Stage 3 simultaneously.
- Students have a good understanding of their standards in reading and writing and how to improve them. This is not so well developed in speaking and listening, particularly at Key Stage 3.

Quality of curriculum

The English curriculum is good.

- The curriculum in English throughout the school is broad and balanced with a good range of activities in reading, writing, speaking and listening.

- Recent changes to the schemes of work are improving the curriculum, ensuring that the learning objectives are clear and that the end of unit assessments are thorough.
- Imaginative planning ensures that the approach to work is creative with active involvement in learning. Consequently, the study of Shakespeare is popular at both key stages amongst students of all abilities.
- Drama and media are integrated well into the English curriculum and the students have plenty of opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT).
- Students with particular learning needs in English are identified well and given good support. Those for whom English is not their first language are given appropriate support and integrated well into class activities.

Leadership and management of English

The quality of the leadership and management of English is good.

- The good leadership of the head of department has created a confident and collaborative team. After a period of some turbulence in staffing, the team is now more stable.
- Good line management ensures that the department is properly held to account and supported in its drive for improvement.
- The department analyses the results of national tests and examinations well and has a good knowledge of its strengths and areas for development.
- Good monitoring procedures enable the department to identify areas for improvement accurately. Students' views are gathered well to modify provision to suit their needs.
- Recent improvements in standards and achievement at Key Stage 3 show that the capacity for further improvement is good.

Independent learning in English

Independent learning in English is good.

- Schemes of work provide appropriate opportunities for independent work and the style of teaching helps students to develop and express their ideas well.
- Good use of the school library encourages independent reading effectively.
- Students report that they are given good support in structuring their writing, with plenty of opportunities to use these skills in independent work.
- Drama is a popular activity in English lessons which helps to increase the students' knowledge, skills and self-confidence.

- ICT is used well to complete written assignments and for conducting independent research.
- The department has introduced "Challenge homework" which requires students to undertake longer independent research to which the students respond positively. However, its use is not consistent across the department.

Inclusion

Inclusion in English is good.

- The department fully and enthusiastically embraces the comprehensive ethos of the school. Lessons are conducted so that all students feel included and able to make a contribution.
- The curriculum is accessible to all learners and appropriate support and intervention enables them to make good progress in their learning.
- Some students at Key Stage 3 do not reach the higher Levels in the national tests of which they are capable, although the overall achievement of the students is good.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- introducing common assessments across year groups in Key Stage 3 to monitor the progress of the students
- raising the achievement of more able students at Key Stage 3; and
- ensuring that the assessment of speaking and listening is effectively shared with the students so that they know their standards and how to improve them.

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

Andrew Harrett
Her Majesty's Inspector