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Ms M Anderson  
Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Anderson

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

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

Achievement and standards

Standards in English are average and pupils' current achievement is good.

- Standards have been consistently in line with national average at the end of both key stages over recent years. However, the improvement in standards at the end of Key Stage 2 since 2005 has been greater than average. The gender gap is broadly average although boys achieved more highly than girls overall in 2007. The school has identified some under-performance of more able pupils.
- Assessment at the end of the Foundation Stage shows that a significant minority of pupils remain below average in English on entry to Key Stage 1.
- Past test results suggest that achievement in English from Key Stage 1-2 has generally been satisfactory. Current tracking data shows that

progress is now good, with a large number of pupils improving by one sub level last term. Discussions with pupils and evidence from books also showed good current achievement.

- Progress in speaking and listening is good. Pupils are mostly confident and fairly articulate when talking to adults.

## Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Lessons observed were good overall. Positive features included: good relationships with pupils; effective use of speaking and listening; good examples of differentiated provision in writing which matched pupils' needs well; and lively and engaging delivery from teachers.
- Some lessons observed were not always clear enough about the particular learning outcomes for pupils and how activities were to contribute to these outcomes.
- Pupils enjoy English and spoke positively about their work. They especially enjoy drama and speaking and listening activities.
- Pupils show a good understanding of how to improve their work in English. This reflects a consistent and effective approach to curricular target setting.
- The quality of marking varies somewhat. The best is detailed and gives good feedback to pupils, often related to progress against the learning objectives. Some marking is less helpful to pupils and too rarely builds on the curricular targets agreed with pupils.

## Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is good.

- The curriculum in English is broad and balanced, making good use of speaking and listening, reading and writing. It motivates and engages pupils, helping them to make good progress.
- The curriculum is enhanced by a number of good enrichment activities. This includes the poetry group, the school magazine and the drama productions, as well as a large number of intervention programmes to support identified groups of pupils.
- Provision for reading is good and most pupils are keen to read. This is supported by the use of reading buddies and volunteers, reading at home, and developing use of the school library.
- The English curriculum is well planned across the different classes. The senior leaders have clear plans for further developments such as more explicit use of literacy in subjects cross the curriculum.

## Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management are good in English.

- There is evidence of improved provision in English and better achievement. This reflects, at least in part, the impact of a newly appointed headteacher and subject leader.
- The subject coordinator is enthusiastic, full of ideas and leads English well. Supported by you, she has identified accurately the key priorities for development. The school is rightly focusing on improving achievement. The subject action plan provides a good sense of direction with appropriate strategies and clear success criteria.
- There are many current developments in English such as improving writing, developing guided reading, extending the impact of the library and reviewing literacy across the curriculum. This appears to have contributed to better teaching and evidence of improved progress from pupils.
- You are developing a range of strategies to improve monitoring and evaluation, including lesson observations, analysis and feedback from work sampling, and finding out about pupils' views and attitudes. The intention is to include the subject leader progressively in these activities.

## Independent learning in English

Independent learning in English is good.

- The school has put in place a number of good examples of independent work in literacy. This includes: research projects in Year 6 in history; a non fiction unit of work in English in Year 3; opportunities for pupils to produce their own writing at home, including Harold's Diary in Year 3 and the Weekend Diary in year1; the Author of the Month work in Year 4; and the school magazine.
- Lessons observed showed good opportunities for independent work in the foundation stage and for more able pupils in writing lessons.
- A focus on speaking and listening and drama activities also supports independent work well.
- The school is currently reviewing its approach to homework, which currently makes too little contribution to independent learning. The school encourages pupils to read at home but the further promotion of independent reading needs to be more systematically planned.

## Inclusion

Inclusion in English is good.

- The school provides a very wide range of intervention programmes for pupils, depending on needs, from year to year. This includes: the ELS

and FLS programmes; some additional commercial programmes; Reading Buddy and Reading Volunteer schemes; support with spelling and phonics; and ICT-based programmes. This is a thorough and well organised programme, well matched to pupils' individual needs, although evaluation of outcomes needs to be more rigorous.

- Support for reading is good and well planned. For example, the older pupils are well trained to act as buddies to younger readers and enjoy doing this.
- Good support was provided in lessons by teaching assistants for identified groups of pupils. Provision for writing was also well planned to ensure that pupils of different levels of attainment could make the same progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving pupils' achievement in English, especially in writing
- extending opportunities for independent work through better use of homework and promoting wider reading outside school
- developing the overall consistency of marking and using it more effectively to reinforce pupils' curricular 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

Philip Jarrett HMI  
Subject Adviser for English