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Mrs Y Watts
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Watts

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 28 March 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 outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Standards in English are high and achievement is outstanding.

- Pupils make excellent progress in English over their time in school.
- Children join the school with standards in reading, linking letters and sounds and writing below the expectations typically seen in children this age. They make very good progress and their independence and confidence are fostered very well.
- Pupils in Year 2 are on target to attain at least above average standards in reading and writing. Imaginative, active learning approaches encourage the development of pupils' thinking through talk and the development of a rich vocabulary.
- Year 6 pupils are on target to attain exceptionally high standards; they are confident, articulate and literate.

- Pupils enjoy English a great deal and display excellent and enthusiastic attitudes to the subject. In lessons, pupils showed their ability to work both independently and in groups effectively.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning of English is outstanding.

- Teaching observed was consistently good and often outstanding. It is the consistency of good English teaching which ensures that pupils make overall excellent progress in their time in the school.
- Lessons are very well planned to meet pupils' needs, with excellent teamwork with teaching assistants (LSAs). Learning actively engages pupils extremely well. Prior learning is carefully built upon and sequences of lessons considered carefully. The inter-relationship between skills is developed very well in lessons.
- Excellent relationships between staff and pupils and very high expectations ensure that classrooms have an extremely positive ethos. Lessons provide a very strong context for pupils to display their strengths and independence
- The school uses its small size extremely effectively. There is very significant informal teaching going on in corridors, before and after school, and during lunchtime. Marking is supportive and helpful. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their learning, work and each other's work.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is outstanding.

- There is a broad and rich English curriculum. The school adopts a creative and flexible approach. Meaningful links are made with other subjects, including SEAL materials. The special days and weeks given to an identified focus make a very significant contribution to its vibrancy.
- Pupils talked with enthusiasm, for example, about their newspaper work arising from the 'fake' burglary. There is extensive use of information and communication technology (ICT) and associated work with media 'texts' along with class readers, plays and poetry. The school recently participated in a pilot film project and using film to develop pupils' skills in visualisation as an aid to writing. Drama, hot-seating, and the end of year productions are also significant features.
- Reading has been given additional emphasis recently. There are extensive class fiction libraries with a good range of texts. Year 6 pupils were able to talk articulately about their favourite authors. The school makes extensive use of volunteers and visitors, including visiting authors.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management of English are outstanding.

- You have an excellent understanding of the strengths of the school. The key issues in the last report relating to the quality of writing have been considered very carefully and incorporated into the school improvement plan with associated linked professional development. The new approach to writing is providing a clear methodology for staff to focus on improving standards.
- There is detailed analysis of internal and external data. The information and implications are considered very effectively so that detailed and credible reasons explain apparent year-on-year differences in performance. There is regular periodic review of the school's work in English.
- There is strong teamwork across the school and a strong formal and informal consideration of how individual pupils are progressing. The effect of the good leadership is seen in the maintenance of very high standards, and the overall improvements since the last inspection. For example, the identification of the need to revisit and reinforce basic skills has led to effective whole school initiatives, in the use of phonics, guided reading and developing writing, and this is having a significant impact.

Independent learning in English

Independent learning in English is outstanding.

- Independent learning is fostered consistently and very well across the school. Teachers are skilled in providing the structured support necessary to give pupils the specific skills they need so that they are in a good position to succeed on their own either individually or in groups.
- Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning through self-assessment and peer-marking. They are consistently encouraged to proof read their own work. They are often given choice of activities, particular approaches or opportunities to develop their work as they wish. Homework is used effectively to provide opportunities for research and independent work.
- The school provides many formal and informal opportunities for older pupils to act as effective role models through linked curriculum work with younger classes or through other activities which provide meaningful contexts for them to display their literacy or oral skills.

Inclusion

Inclusion in English is outstanding.

- Pupils' progress is monitored very closely. There are very good links with parents and their active involvement is sought in, for example, supporting pupils' reading development.
- Difficulties are identified early and specific support is targeted effectively so that individuals are able to catch up.
- There is excellent teamwork with LSAs who work extremely effectively with individuals or groups of pupils. Pupils make excellent progress against their individual targets because of the very high quality of support they receive.
- The school helps pupils to appreciate the diverse nature of society through its extensive work in personal, social and health education (PSHE) and other curriculum areas.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- consolidating current strategies for developing the quality of pupils' writing across the school.

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