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Mrs S James  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs James

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 10 June 2008 to look at work 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 satisfactory but with some good features.

Achievement and standards

Standards in English are average. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall.

- Standards have been broadly in line with the national average at the end of Key Stage 2 over the past five years. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have slipped in recent years, particularly in writing. Standards in reading tend to be consistently stronger than writing at all key stages.
- The small size of the school inevitably produces some variability in standards and achievement. For example, most pupils added two levels of progress in the Year 6 national tests last year whereas the proportion was much lower in 2006.
- Contextual value added data, together with the school's Fisher Family Trust analysis, shows that achievement has been broadly satisfactory over the past two years. Standards on entry to the school in communication, language and literacy are weaker than in the other

areas of learning, especially in writing. This means that the school has slightly more pupils than the local authority average who are not yet working securely within the early learning goals by the end of the foundation stage.

- The schools' own view is that achievement is better for the younger pupils than at Key Stage 2. Their own tracking records for pupils currently in the school appear to support this. For example, the records show that significant numbers of pupils in Years 5 and 6 have not made the progress expected in writing.

### Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Lessons observed were good overall. Teachers formed good relationships with pupils. They made use of a wide range of approaches that engaged pupils well. Planning was detailed and included some well considered oral activities.
- There were no significant weaknesses in the lessons observed. However, some lessons focused on too wide a range of learning objectives and this caused a lack of focus and direction at times. Teaching assistants supported individual pupils well although teachers needed to consider how to involve them in all phases of the lessons.
- In discussion, pupils were broadly positive about English. They especially enjoy reading. Some pupils expressed the view that work in English was not always sufficiently challenging.
- Teachers' marking was often detailed and positive. The school has identified the need to improve feedback to pupils about their work and has just introduced a new policy on curricular targets in writing.

### Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is good.

- There are a number of positive features to the English curriculum which help to motivate and engage pupils. In particular, there is good provision for reading through whole school independent reading sessions (ERIC), a lunchtime reading club for older pupils, and weekly buddy reading sessions involving Year 5 and Year 2 pupils. The subject leader has also produced a detailed action plan identifying how the school's contribution to the National Year of Reading will benefit pupils.
- The English curriculum is enriched by the school's involvement in the Creative Partnerships programme. This provides a range of opportunities, including theatre groups, and activities such as visits to Pleasley Vale Outdoor Centre, as part of the Living Literacy programme. The programme also stimulates pupils through a variety of practical and creative experiences that enhance their literacy work. In

particular, there are good opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively as well as independently.

- The school has significantly improved the library. This is now a welcoming environment, open on a weekly basis at lunchtimes for pupils, and integrated into the curriculum for all year groups.
- Opportunities for developing literacy skills and independent learning are also provided through the pupils' newspaper and the lunchtime radio.
- The school is currently implementing the new curriculum proposals for English and has plans to extend the links between English and the other subjects.

## Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management are good in English.

- The subject leader has been given increased responsibility to manage the subject and she has responded well to this. She is enthusiastic and conscientious and has kept colleagues well informed about new curriculum developments as well as attending training and local network meetings.
- The school has a thorough and detailed development plan for English. This includes some appropriate key priorities in areas such as reading, and speaking and listening, although more emphasis is needed on writing.
- A good audit of staff knowledge has identified well the areas for future development and training. The subject leader has responded effectively to the National Year of Reading.
- Good leadership is evident in recent improvements to the school library as well as the introduction of a whole school approach to curricular targets.
- The school is making good use of challenging targets to raise standards for all. It tracks the progress of individual pupils well and is using this effectively to provide additional support, where needed.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving standards and achievement in writing; and
- increasing the proportion of good teaching throughout the school by clearer emphasis on key learning objectives in lessons and reviewing the use of Teaching Assistants in all phases of the lesson.

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