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Mr D Davies
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Davies

Ofsted subject survey: good practice in English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 11 June 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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: discussions with staff and students; scrutiny of documentation and students' work; and observation of three lessons.

Features of good practice observed

- Achievement in English is excellent. Many students enter the school with low levels of literacy or at an early stage of learning English. By the time they leave the school, students achieve examination results broadly in line with the national average. The department has a good track record of ensuring all groups of students make very good progress, especially in Key Stage 4. The department has identified pockets of lower attainment, for example, in reading in Key Stage 3.
- Your students are extremely positive about English. They form very good relationships with their teachers. One boy's view that "We know we are all special to them" summed up the very good climate of the classroom discussions seen and the sensitive yet specific guidance given to students about how to improve their work.
- Students greatly appreciate the wide range of visitors, outings, events and out of school support which the department provides. They are also positive about the way the curriculum is tailored to their needs. For example, Year 8 and 9 students taught in groups based on stage of

learning, rather than age, are motivated by the challenge and appreciate how it is helping them make rapid progress.

- English lessons are stimulating, varied and active. Topics and resources are carefully chosen to reflect students' interests, broaden their experiences and challenge their understanding. Expectations are high and there is a growing emphasis on learning independently. Students often ask their own questions and express individual views, and the teachers skilfully build on what they offer. Students learn to manage group work and to treat different viewpoints with the respect modelled by the teachers.
- The subject leader's passionate enthusiasm for the subject is shared by the cohesive and energetic team. The team, including the teaching assistant who leads literacy interventions, works with a high degree of consistency.
- There is a common determination to raise standards. Monitoring is rigorous and the subject leader has a thorough understanding of strengths and areas for development. Good practice is shared effectively. This has had a positive effect on students' understanding of their next steps in English. The department is innovative and evaluative, well supported by yourself and the senior team. Teachers enjoy working together on developing schemes of work and review their work in the light of evidence.

Areas for development

- improving students' progress in reading in Key Stage 3

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop English in the school.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Susan Bowles
Her Majesty's Inspector