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Ms M Rolph
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Dear Ms Rolph

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 22 May 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 good.

Achievement and standards

Standards in English are above average and achievement is good.

- Pupils make good progress and achieve well in English over their time in school. For the last three years, standards in English at the end of Year 6 were above average – close to being exceptionally high. The percentage of pupils gaining Level 5 is above average. Current Year 6 pupils are on track to achieve their targets and attain similar standards.
- In 2007, standards in reading at the end of Year 2 were below average and broadly average in writing. There has been a prolonged period of staffing difficulties and instability in this class. Currently pupils in Year 2 are on target to meet their targets and have made at least satisfactory progress in relation to their starting points. The school has made changes to the curriculum in Year 3, for example to allow for greater consolidation of phonics work and, as a result, the attainment for these pupils is back on track.

- By Year 6, standards in reading are above average reflecting the improvements made, for example to guided reading. The school promotes and encourages reading for pleasure but eroding the reluctance of some pupils remains an ongoing challenge. Standards in writing are above average. Guided writing has helped develop the content and quality of writing. Pupils write functionally well and can write and express themselves in different styles although imaginative writing tends to draw on a relatively narrow range of ideas or influences.
- The school has identified the need to improve speaking skills, particularly in the use of 'formal' rather than 'casual' speech. In the lessons seen, there was a good emphasis given to developing speaking and listening skills.
- English makes a particularly good contribution to pupils' personal development. Lessons foster aspects such as pupils' individuality, independence, creativity or intellectual engagement very effectively.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning of English is good.

- The very good relationships that teachers have with the pupils are an important element in pupils' learning. Teachers know the pupils very well and are therefore able to respond to them individually. They plan effectively, together with the Teaching Assistants, to provide pupils with good support or challenge.
- Lessons include good opportunities for reading, writing, speaking and listening. They build effectively on prior learning and teachers share the learning objectives and evaluate progress against them. Pupils often engage actively in the lesson through effective questioning.
- Classroom management is skilled. There is quiet and unobtrusive management of behaviour. Teachers establish clear parameters based on high expectations, are enthusiastic, confident in their subject knowledge and are therefore comfortable setting open-ended creative group tasks. In one lesson, for example, pupils explored the meaning of a poem by acting it out. Teachers see the potential for drama to support pupils' learning but need more confidence and expertise to take the work further.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of how to improve their work because of the quality of feedback that they receive and their targets.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is good.

- There is a broad and rich English curriculum. Key objectives are carefully matched for each Year group. Teachers manage the mixed age classrooms effectively.
- Pupils experience a good range of poetry, plays and texts. A school priority is the development of the broader curriculum in line with recent guidance. Links are being developed between subjects and this provides additional contexts for English work. The school makes good use of visitors and parents.
- There are good enrichment opportunities through trips, including to the theatre, the drama club and school production. Themed weeks and special days such as the Multi-cultural and reading weeks add additional vibrancy. Pupils use video, film and ICT confidently.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management of English are good.

- You have a very detailed and accurate picture of English in your school based upon excellent use of performance data, question analysis and detailed school tracking. You have very high expectations and detailed knowledge of the pupils.
- There is very good identification of what needs to be done to improve standards and achievement. There is very clear action planning and evaluation of the impact, for example, in the steps taken to get Year 3's standards back on track. You have responded to the previous inspection by strategic investment in the Foundation Stage. You have worked effectively to ensure that there is now more consistent, even progress across the school, providing the foundation for further improvement in pupils' achievement and standards.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing staff confidence and expertise in the use of drama within the classroom.

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