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15 July 2008

Mr P Linton
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Linton

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 07 July 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, analysis of pupils' work, scrutiny of documentation and three lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Standards in English are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory.

- Children start school with standards in communication, language and literacy that are below expectations. They make satisfactory progress across the Foundation Stage. Standards at the end of Reception are below those generally seen in language for communication and thinking, reading and writing.
- In the past, pupils made satisfactory progress across Key Stage 1 to attain standards that were below average in reading and writing – a key issue in the previous inspection report. Standards improved markedly at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2007. Currently achievement across Key Stage 1 is satisfactory but improving.
- Historically, progress across Key Stage 2 has been satisfactory. It relied upon pupils making rapid progress in Year 6 to even out erratic progress in younger classes. In 2007, standards and achievement dipped to well below average. Girls in particular underperformed. The move of a key member of staff from Year 6 to Year 2 accounts for the sudden changes in overall pattern of results in both key stages in

2007. However, pupils continue to make significant progress in Year 6. Standards are likely to be slightly below average in the Year 6 tests this year, indicating satisfactory achievement in relation to their starting point.

- There are good opportunities across the school to develop speaking and listening skills and, as a result, pupils are confident in giving extended answers to questions. Developing pupils' writing skills has been a major focus in the school, leading to a significant improvement. Pupils enjoy writing and are proud of their work. Reading skills are average. The school's support for reading, particularly reading for pleasure, is not as evident as that for writing.
- Pupils with special educational needs and with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. English makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils respond well to the subject and gain a sense of achievement, particularly from the creative writing opportunities.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning of English is satisfactory.

- Currently learning is variable so that pupils do not yet make consistent progress across the school. The overall quality of English teaching has improved from that described in the previous whole-school inspection report.
- There is a common approach to marking. Teachers have a good understanding of levels and share next steps criteria with pupils. Pupils are given clear indications how to improve their work.
- In the good or better lessons observed, pupils were very clear about what they were doing, how this fitted into what they had done previously and their success criteria. Work provided challenge or support to those pupils who needed it. In these lessons, teachers modelled work, ensured pupils shared ideas and intellectually involved them in the learning through an active approach. Pupils' work shows an increasing depth of response through the units. In a couple of classes, there was creative use of drama and active approaches to engage pupils in English. Teachers across the school would benefit from sharing this expertise.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is satisfactory.

- There is significant recent and ongoing improvement to the Early Years provision in creating an imaginative language environment, zoning of learning bays and enrichment of the outdoor area.
- The curriculum provides good opportunities for developing speaking and listening and writing. There is not an equally strong culture to promote independent reading. The library and the school's book stock require revitalising.

- The curriculum draws on the new framework to cover a full range of English experiences and includes work in media and good opportunities to use information and communication technology.
- The school evaluates the effectiveness of its intervention programmes well to help support pupils.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management of English are satisfactory.

- You provide clear leadership. There is now a very clear sense of direction for the subject and strong partnership with the local authority. Self-evaluation is accurate and based on detailed analysis of school data. The senior leadership has developed staff optimism and accountability along with the necessary support to help them improve. The work on writing has helped raise teachers' expectations of pupils' capability and their professional confidence.
- The literacy co-coordinator, new to the role, has a clear understanding of the subject development needs but also the importance of consolidating many aspects of the work introduced so far, particularly in the light of staffing changes.
- Teaching has improved and achievement is more secure, particularly at Key Stage 1. Essential systems are now in place and because the school tracks pupils' progress carefully, it is able to identify pupils who need additional support.
- These initiatives have not yet worked through into improved standards or consistently good progress from all pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that pupils make consistently good progress across the school
- fostering a culture which encourages independent reading
- further improving teaching by drawing on existing staff expertise – particularly in the use of creative and practical approaches to engage pupils in their English work.

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

