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Mr P Terry  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Terry

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 16 October to look at work in English.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject the visit included a focus on our current survey theme of creativity 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 below average but improving. Pupils' achievement is good.

- Standards on entry to the school are well below average. The school receives a significant number of pupils for whom English is an additional language.
- Standards have generally been below average at the end of Key Stage 2. However, results improved in 2007 and were in line with average. The unvalidated results for 2008 appear to be broadly similar although there were fewer Level 5 results. The trend is upwards at Key Stage 2. English results are substantially better than mathematics or science.
- Assessments in reading are weaker than writing at the end of Key Stage 1. This picture changes through Key Stage 2 as reading

improves while standards of writing remain weak. Many pupils continue to find writing difficult and enjoy reading far more.

- The contextual value added data suggests that achievement from Key Stage 1-2 is broadly average. However, when pupils' very low starting points in English on entry to the school are taken into account, their overall progress is good.
- English makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils are given frequent opportunities to express their views and to collaborate together. Their behaviour and attitudes were very good during the inspection.

### Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning of English is good.

- Most pupils enjoy lessons in English and make good progress because of good teaching. Older pupils notice a change in their lessons as they get closer to the national tests at the end of Year 6.
- Relationships in lessons observed during the visit were very good. Pupils were keen to learn and enthusiastic about joining in with discussions.
- The lessons observed were all of good or satisfactory quality. The Reception class lesson confirmed that pupils are developing their phonic knowledge well through a well planned programme. The Year 2 lesson introduced pupils to poems through direct experiences and opportunities to share ideas in small groups. The Year 5 lessons made good use of a range of lively approaches to teach pupils about myths.
- There was a tendency in lessons observed for teachers to try to cover too much and this limited time for pupils' independent work. At times, the lesson objectives were not specific enough to provide clear direction to the learning.
- Although approaches to marking vary somewhat across the school, all teachers set learning targets and give clear feedback to pupils about areas for improvement. The Year 6 pupils all knew their reading and writing targets and what they needed to do to improve.

### Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is good.

- The school is currently engaged in a systematic review of the curriculum for pupils, aiming to develop a more creative curriculum that will motivate them more effectively. This work is well planned and based on clear principles. Although it is likely to affect subjects other than English more, it is already leading to more direct links between subjects.

- The English curriculum has a number of strengths. Speaking and listening are built in well, good use is made of pupils' direct experience and the school takes opportunities to develop independent learning.
- The school promotes reading well. Year 6 pupils were very positive about reading and talked enthusiastically about their favourite books and authors. Reading is well supported by the school library, a good range of resources and clear guidance for staff on guided reading. Attitudes towards writing are less positive, especially from boys.
- The school provides a good range of intervention initiatives in a well managed programme. There are good systems for tracking pupils' progress and matching them to the right intervention and the school is now beginning to evaluate the impact of the different initiatives more closely.
- The curriculum in English is enriched by good experiences in drama for pupils and the occasional visit of writers and other arts practitioners.

### Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management of English are good.

- The subject leader has worked well in the past year to support implementation of the new primary Framework, the revised approaches to teaching phonics and developments in guided reading. She is well supported by a cross phase subject team which meets regularly to exchange ideas and review progress.
- Good senior leadership is evident in the current changes to the curriculum and rising standards. There is a systematic approach to monitoring and evaluation. The subject leader tracks the quality of teachers' marking and planning, and gives helpful feedback to staff. Lesson observations are thorough and provide a balanced view of strengths and weaknesses although at times there is too little emphasis on the progress made by pupils.
- The school tracks pupils' progress systematically and uses this data well to analyse performance and identify pupils for additional support. There is also good analysis and use of test question level data. This has helped the school to form a clear and accurate view of its overall performance in English.
- Subject plans are detailed and thorough. However, they need to be more closely planned around the key priorities that will help to improve standards and achievement for pupils.

### Creativity in English

The school is currently trying to put creativity at the heart of its revised curriculum. The view of senior leaders is that pupils' learning has been too passive and they are seeking to develop a curriculum that is based on themes that will engage pupils and help them to develop the key skills they need. The approach is an exploratory one that gives pupils more say in their learning

and makes better use of drama and information and communication technology. The school is working closely with two others to develop a coherent curriculum for their pupils. In English, this has led to a greater focus on drama and speaking and listening, with more links to other subjects. Good projects have included an after-school magazine and productions of Shakespeare plays.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- increasing the number of pupils who achieve the higher levels at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2
- improving standards in writing and pupils' attitudes towards writing
- developing subject plans that are more focused on the key actions that will raise standards.

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