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Mr M Lock  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Lock

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 13 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 four lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be satisfactory.

#### Achievement and standards

Standards in English are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory.

- Standards have been consistently in line with, or slightly above, average at the end of Key Stage 2 over recent years. Early indications are that results for 2008 are at least in line with previous years.
- Achievement is satisfactory overall. This is confirmed by CVA data over the past three years as well as progress in lessons during the inspection. However, some pupils do better than this. The 2007 results show that the least able pupils made good progress. Boys achieved more highly than girls, in contrast with the national trend.
- Evidence across Key Stages 1 and 2 suggests that more able pupils should achieve more highly in English. For example, far more pupils achieved Level 5 in mathematics last year than in English.

- Pupils are very keen to learn and show positive attitudes in lessons. Behaviour is good and pupils work well together in pairs and small groups.

## Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning of English is satisfactory.

- Lessons observed were all of good or satisfactory quality. Relationships with pupils were good and this encouraged pupils to contribute to discussions and work hard. Discussions with pupils confirmed that they enjoy lessons in English.
- The four lessons observed were very different. The Foundation Stage session showed pupils responding well to a good range of resources and working independently. The Year 2 lesson showed that the school has developed a systematic approach to teaching phonics with pupils grouped according to ability in small classes. The Year 5 lesson featured some lively and interactive tasks that developed pupils' oral abilities. The Year 6 lesson showed a well structured approach to guided reading with opportunities for pupils' independent work in reading and writing.
- Minor weaknesses in lessons observed included a slow pace on occasions and the need for closer monitoring of pupils' progress within lessons.
- Pupils' work is marked in detail and teachers provide positive encouragement. However, pupils in Year 6 seemed unsure about how to improve their work and feedback to them through marking or targets needs to be clearer about the next steps in their learning.

## Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is good.

- There are a number of positive aspects to the English curriculum. There is a good balance of work covering reading, writing, and speaking and listening. The school is extending cross-curricular links and is seeking to improve flexibility and creativity. This includes particular initiatives such as themed weeks.
- The programme for reading has been revised and this has had a positive impact on pupils' attitudes. Approaches to guided reading have been improved, resources extended and parents involved in supporting reading at home. There are good links with the public library and the school is planning to develop use of their own library.
- The curriculum is enriched by occasional visits from writers and theatre groups. The Year 6 class sent some of their own work to a published author and were pleased to receive a detailed, personal response. Older pupils were successful in winning the LA film making competition last year.

- Pupils' books showed a good range of extended writing, some of it based on free choice for pupils.

## Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management of English are good.

- The subject leader is enthusiastic and knowledgeable. She provides good leadership, supported by the senior team. She has worked well with staff on implementing the new primary framework, introducing the phonics programme, and reviewing approaches to reading.
- The curriculum has been improved. The school has responded well to the literacy recommendations of the previous whole school inspection. In particular, there has been a thorough and substantial new programme to promote reading.
- The school has a well balanced approach to supporting pupils of below average attainment. This includes one-to-one sessions on reading, Booster classes for pupils working towards national tests and other support based on small group teaching by classroom assistants. The school tracks pupils' progress carefully and uses this information well to identify pupils for particular programmes.
- The school has introduced a systematic programme of monitoring activities for the subject leader. Current feedback to teachers needs to be sharper in identifying areas for development. Subject planning is thorough and helpful but does not make sufficient use of performance data to identify those actions that will have most impact on learning outcomes.

## Creativity in English

The school is seeking to develop pupils' creativity as part of the revised curriculum. The approach focuses on giving pupils' choices over activities and outcomes. In addition, the aim is to extend cross-curricular work and develop more flexibility, for example through the use of themed weeks. Pupils were given choices in some of the lessons observed, for instance within independent reading and the use of writing journals. In addition, some of the teaching was creative in involving pupils in their own learning and in the use of imaginative activities that stimulated their interest.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising the achievement of more able pupils in English
- making better use of performance data to analyse trends and identify the key actions for improvement
- extending pupils' understanding of how to improve their 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

Philip Jarrett HMI  
Subject Adviser for English