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Mrs A Hewson
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Dear Mrs Hewson

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 17 November 2008 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 but improving.

Achievement and standards

Standards in English are above average and achievement is satisfactory.

- Standards have risen substantially at the end of Key Stage 2 over the past two years. Test results tend to vary because of the very small number of children involved. Nevertheless, the recent pattern is of above average standards at the end of Year 6. The school is successful at helping most pupils to reach the expected standards at the end of both key stages but it acknowledges that too few pupils have achieved the higher levels. Standards in reading are better than standards in writing.
- Standards at the end of the Foundation Stage are above average in communication, language and literacy. Overall, pupils make

satisfactory progress across Key Stages 1-2. This is confirmed by the school's own analysis as well as CVA and other data.

- Progress in lessons observed was mixed. Pupils were very keen to do well and responded especially well to lively and interactive approaches. English makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. In particular, pupils gain in confidence and learn to work well with others. As a result, some of the pupils speak with considerable maturity and express themselves very well.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning of English is satisfactory overall.

- Lessons observed varied in quality but included many good features. Relationships with pupils were positive and this encouraged pupils to contribute to discussions and work hard. Discussions with Year 6 pupils confirmed that they enjoy lessons in English.
- The four lessons observed were very different. Where lessons were most effective, the activities were lively and motivated pupils well. Learning objectives were clear and fully understood by the pupils. Pupils were also given opportunities to review their own learning and commented sensibly on the progress made by others. Pupils worked well in small groups or pairs providing good mutual support.
- All lessons were planned carefully with considerable thought given to meeting the needs of different groups of pupils within the mixed age classes. At times, this made it difficult for teachers to support or monitor the work of the different groups equally effectively.
- The quality of assessment in English is good. Year 6 pupils showed a very clear understanding of their personal targets in writing and could explain well what they needed to do to improve their work. This showed the impact of detailed and helpful feedback from teachers in their marking.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is good.

- The school has reviewed its curriculum in line with recent national recommendations and is working well to provide a curriculum that meets pupils' needs, motivates them and develops key skills across subjects. These new developments have benefited English and have contributed to recent improvements in standards. Pupils enjoy their work in English.
- The school provides a good balance of work covering reading, writing, and speaking and listening. The reading curriculum is especially strong. Good quality class texts are integrated into the schemes of work and independent reading is promoted well through a good range of

contemporary texts within the library. Older pupils speak enthusiastically about their reading.

- The school has also focused attention on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. Training has been provided for teachers on drama approaches and pupils respond well where oral activities are at the centre of learning.
- The curriculum is further enhanced by a range of extra-curricular activities including visits to the theatre and other sites, together with occasional visitors into school. These activities are used well to develop literacy skills.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management of English are good.

- In this very small school, all members of staff have to take on a number of roles. Despite this, subject leadership in English is good and has contributed well to the recent improvements in standards.
- Monitoring and evaluation are extremely thorough. The annual programme provides opportunities for the subject leader to carry out lessons observations, review plans, monitor pupils' work, and standardise across classes. The school also makes good use of feedback from pupils about English.
- The subject leader has reviewed provision in English and this has provided the school with a secure view of its strengths and weaknesses. There is a good development plan for English, focused on raising standards further and identifying a range of appropriate actions. The subject leader has provided good leadership for staff with recent developments focused on areas such as guided reading and teaching phonics. She is an effective classroom teacher and models good practice well for colleagues.
- The school acknowledges that there is more work to be done on monitoring pupils' progress. In particular, it needs to be able to track the progress made by individual pupils over time and to use this evidence to identify trends and patterns in pupils' progress.

Creativity in English

The school is seeking to develop pupils' creativity as part of the revised curriculum. You have a clear understanding of what this means to the school and its further development. For example, there is an emphasis on giving teachers the confidence to teach flexibly and imaginatively. There were examples of creative teaching and learning during the visit, for example with Year 6 pupils presenting their script expressively to the rest of the class and the Foundation Stage pupils using imaginative play to develop literacy skills. The school is also developing cross-curricular links and using this to enable pupils to apply skills across different contexts. Finally, you have encouraged

teachers to use time more creatively and not to be limited by the constraints of the timetable.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving achievement by increasing the number of pupils who reach the higher levels and closing the gap between standards in reading and writing
- analysing the performance data more effectively in order to identify trends and patterns in achievement in English.

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