

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040  
F 020 7421 6855  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Mrs S Rizak  
Headteacher  
The Richard Heathcote Community Primary  
The Drive  
Alsagers Bank  
Stoke on Trent  
Staffordshire  
ST7 8BB

Dear Mrs Rizak

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 11 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 five lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be satisfactory and improving.

#### Achievement and standards

Achievement in English is satisfactory and improving. Standards are broadly average.

- In 2008, the provisional results for pupils in Year 2 improved on the previous year and were broadly average with similar levels of performance in reading and writing.
- The provisional results for Year 6 pupils in 2008 improved markedly on those in 2007 and were broadly average overall. Standards in reading were above average but those in writing were below average.
- Pupils made satisfactory progress from their starting points. Although girls appeared to have performed less well than boys in 2007, this was not the case in 2008 when they performed generally better than boys.

- Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities generally make similar progress to their peers.
- In lessons, pupils enjoyed their work and tried hard. All pupils worked well in pairs and small groups. Older pupils showed good independence in their learning.

### Quality of teaching and learning of English

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some good features. The school has had a number of changes in teaching staff in the last two years.

- Teachers plan lessons thoroughly and the better lessons had very clear objectives supported by criteria for success.
- Relationships are good. Teachers use paired work effectively to help pupils to develop their ideas and to review each other's work.
- Teacher's use of assessment in lessons varies in quality and some lesson endings are too rushed to allow teachers to review pupils' learning and progress.
- There is increasing use of a range of structured approaches to improve pupils' writing but these are not yet adopted in all classes.
- Pupils know their targets and value teachers' comments. There are good examples of marking in some classes and useful comments for pupils on how to improve their work but this is not yet consistent enough across the school.

### Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is good.

- There is a good range and balance of topics and types of work. Speaking and listening is a strong aspect of teachers' planning and drama, group work and creative activities increasingly form an important element of lessons which pupils say they enjoy.
- The subject co-ordinators have a clear vision for the development of the curriculum and have encouraged broader topics and the consolidation of literacy skills through other subjects. There are good examples of real activities such as an enterprise week and school newspaper which are used to motivate pupils to write.
- Teachers use interactive white boards effectively to structure learning and to make lessons enjoyable.
- There is a good range of additional small group sessions to support those pupils who need extra help with their literacy skills.

## Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving.

- Since September the leadership of English has been shared by three teachers, each taking responsibility for one of the key skills areas. These arrangements are at an early stage but draw effectively on the teachers' skills and interests. The staff are enthusiastic and committed.
- The subject leaders have a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses in English and have devised action plans for each area, although these currently lack measurable criteria by which progress could be monitored.
- The subject leaders have reviewed key policies but this work is too recent for practice yet to be consistent. They are monitoring provision and the implementation of some key approaches through reviewing teachers' planning, pupils' work and interviewing pupils.
- Each of the subject leaders has led training with the whole staff to establish common approaches and to pass on what they have learnt at external courses.

## Creativity in English

- The subject leaders have encouraged teachers to plan creative activities within a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Pupils have enjoyed working with poets and theatre groups. They value drama and group work, saying that role play and discussion help them with ideas for their work. They enjoy using computers to conduct research and improve the presentation of their writing.
- Teachers increasingly plan extended activities with real purposes such as the enterprise week based on pupils forming companies.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring a consistent approach to the development of skills to improve pupils' writing
- sharing the best practice in teachers' use of comments and feedback to help pupils know exactly what they need to improve and how to do so
- developing measurable success criteria for the subject action plans so that subject leaders may assess performance accurately.

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

Martin Cragg  
Her Majesty's Inspector