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Mrs J Norton
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Norton

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 01 December 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 three lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be good with some outstanding features.

Achievement and standards

Standards in English are well above average and achievement is good.

- Standards are consistently very high at the end of Key Stage 2. Although standards in reading are better than writing, the gap is less than that commonly found in most schools.
- Pupils make good progress across the school in English. Although the CVA data has been variable in the past, achievement has improved over the past two years. Provisional results for 2008 show a rise in the number of pupils reaching Level 4 with a slight decline in the proportion achieving Level 5.
- Evidence from the inspection confirmed good progress by pupils. In particular, pupils learn to speak confidently and express their ideas with considerable maturity.

- All groups of pupils make at least good progress in English. The gap between girls' and boys' performance is less than average. Some pupils whose first language is not English make remarkable progress and reach very high standards.
- English makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. They learn to work well in small groups, to respect different views and to use their initiative in oral work and drama activities.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning of English is good.

- Good achievement in English confirms that the quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Pupils enjoy lessons in English and the Year 6 pupils I met described it as their favourite subject. They especially like lessons that make use of active approaches such as drama and opportunities to use the interactive white-board.
- Lessons observed were all at least good and all included some elements that were outstanding.
- Positive features of lessons included very good relationships, good classroom management and very high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Teachers made good use of clear learning objectives and outcomes for pupils.
- Lessons were made interesting for pupils because of the variety of activities and engaging content. Good teacher knowledge was reflected in effective planning for differentiation.
- At times, opportunities were missed to give pupils more independence in lessons. While the use of talk partners was a positive feature of all lessons, some of the tasks did not encourage pupils to talk at length.
- The quality of assessment in English is good. Older pupils showed a very good understanding of their writing targets and what was needed to improve their work. This showed the impact of helpful feedback from teachers in their marking.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is outstanding.

- The curriculum is very successful at engaging pupils and helping them to make good progress. Pupils respond well to English.
- The curriculum is especially strong at making good use of real contexts, concrete experiences, enrichment activities and cross curricular work to stimulate pupils' writing. This works well and contributes towards high standards. Some especially good quality extended writing was noted in subjects other than English including history. The school also motivates pupils to write through frequent publications of their work such as in class collections.

- Pupils respond well to the regular opportunities for oral work and drama in English. The school is also developing media work in English including film making and a school magazine.
- Good provision for reading has had a positive impact on pupils' attitudes. Pupils enjoy reading and are well supported by a good choice of books in the library. Teachers plan carefully for both guided group reading and independent reading although there is too little discussion of books other than class texts at the moment. The school is working to improve the library but it is not yet functioning fully to promote reading.
- The school offers a very good range of enrichment activities to support English, including occasional thematic days and first hand experiences that provide stimulus for pupils' writing. In addition, there are frequent visitors to the school such as a "Roman soldier" and visits to theatres and other local sites; these enhance the quality of literacy work. All classes are involved in creating their own productions. Other support is provided by the library club, activities targeted at gifted and talented pupils, and the newspaper club.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management of English are good.

- The leadership of the school has successfully used challenging targets and high expectations to improve achievement and raise standards in English. The subject is well organised and there is a rigorous approach to evaluation and further improvement. The quality of subject documentation and guidance is high.
- The school's self-evaluation in English is thorough and effective. This includes a regular, formal review of English every two years. As a result, senior leaders know the strengths and weaknesses in the subject well.
- The subject leader is fully involved in procedures for monitoring and evaluation. The school makes good use of the full range of evidence including feedback from pupils. This has enabled it to improve and invigorate the curriculum. Performance data is analysed carefully leading to good awareness of any under-performance, and subsequent action.
- Improvement plans for English are well based around the key priorities for action but need to focus more on ways of evaluating impact.

Creativity in English

The school has a clear view of ways in which to develop creativity in English. You are seeking to do this through developing real contexts for pupils' language as well as linking subjects together more. You also encourage teachers to be more creative in their teaching and are seeking to make more imaginative use of curriculum time in order to provide opportunities for

extended and independent learning. Good use of drama encourages pupils to make their own decisions and to work together collaboratively.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- extending opportunities for pupils to work independently
- improving use of the school library.

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