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Mrs J Pearce
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Pearce

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 26 September 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 good.

Achievement and standards

Standards in English are average and achievement is good.

- Many children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) with lower than expected levels of achievement in communication, language and literacy. They make good progress and the great majority are working at the expected levels by the end of the reception year.
- Standards achieved by the end of Year 2 are average overall and show a steady trend of improvement. In Key Stage 2, standards as reflected in tests results have to date been average. Pupils do better in reading and speaking and listening than in writing, but the quality of writing is catching up as a result of a concerted effort to teach it more effectively.
- Boys make just as good progress as girls, based on several years' results. The same is true for pupils from minority ethnic groups. Some

of those who arrive at an early stage of learning English also make good progress by the end of Year 6.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning in English is good.

- The teaching observed during my visit was mostly good. In EYFS, rich opportunities for speaking and listening, effective teaching of reading and writing, and help for parents to support their children's literacy combine to have a very positive effect. This sets the pattern across the age range.
- Effective features seen across classes include clear and lively teaching and plenty of challenging opportunities for pupils to play an active role. Involvement in speaking and listening and other activities prepared pupils well for writing independently.
- Teachers' planning is clear about how pupils will learn, based on good understanding of their needs. One example of the strategies effectively used is the use of recording devices by pupils to rehearse their oral sentences before they write.
- Independence and creativity are encouraged well through giving pupils choices and responsibilities. This showed very clearly when groups of Year 4 pupils collaborated to present episodes from a story as freeze frames, then worked out the narrative sequence of the scenes by closely analysing each others' tableaux. In general, teachers handle such activities confidently and effectively and pupils respond well.
- Teachers are adept at assessing written and oral work and give pupils clear feedback. Occasionally teachers' questions are not clear enough, leaving pupils unsure what's expected of them.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Teaching programmes strike a good balance between thorough consolidation of skills and engaging and enriching experiences. Imaginative links between areas of the curriculum help pupils see the point of activities and transfer concepts and skills.
- One reason why many pupils were able to talk about their independent reading is that attractive books are always close to hand and schemes of work make good use of them.
- Drama and speaking and listening activities are linked well to pupils' reading and writing.
- Pupils enjoy their regular extended writing time, because they can work independently on projects they find interesting. They use Information and Communication Technology routinely and to good effect to research, record, or communicate. For example, Year 5 pupils share their traditional oral stories in the form of podcasts, and Year 6

present their research into literary genres using the interactive whiteboard, and this is filmed so that they can evaluate their presentation skills.

- Pupils speak enthusiastically about special events and extra learning, such as participating in school productions, special reading events or visits to the theatre.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management are good.

- You and the subject leader are effective in tackling any detected areas of underperformance. The carefully considered focus on improving writing has been well led. Coherent strategies have been disseminated effectively, partly because the subject leader models them well. The strategies are applied consistently in classrooms.
- Teachers' planning and pupils' work have been monitored. Some peer observation has been done recently to develop a better understanding of what helps learners' progress and to share expertise. This has produced improvement in outcomes in Key Stage 1 and there are early positive indications in Key Stage 2, though it is still an area the school is working on.
- The leadership is equally alert to group differences. Boys' enjoyment of the speaking and listening activities is very evident, and boys strive to match the high expectations for writing.
- Staff are committed to inclusion and make satisfactory use of the guidance and support they have to meet the needs of the more vulnerable pupils. However, they occasionally miss opportunities to accelerate the progress of children at an early stage of learning English.

Creativity in English

- Teachers have done much to develop a more creative curriculum. Links between English and other subjects are helping the pupils to transfer their skills and make use of learning to communicate more effectively. Pupils are encouraged to think independently and manage collaborative work for themselves, from an early age.
- Pupils talk with enthusiasm about opportunities to develop individual creative interests in performing or using technology to make animations.
- The wide use of drama activities like hotseating and role play and discussions which ask pupils to make real choices are having a positive effect on engagement.
- Teachers' lesson planning shows a spirit of inventiveness and growing confidence in taking risks. The pupils are responding well to the challenge and variety.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- checking the effectiveness of strategies to support vulnerable pupils, such as those at an early stage of learning English
- reviewing how well teachers' questioning supports independent learning.

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

Susan Bowles
Her Majesty's Inspector