

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Ms D Packham
Headteacher
Rusper Primary School
Rusper
Horsham
RH12 4 PR

Dear Ms Packham

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 13 October 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 outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is outstanding and standards are above average.

- Standards are high at the end of each key stage and there is an upward trend in results over time.
- Pupils make a good start with reading, phonics and writing in the Foundation Stage class. Older pupils in Key Stage 2 use these skills well, including word processing and editing, for a range of purposes. Pupils speak and listen well as they collaborate in varied learning activities.
- Girls and boys develop skills in reading and speaking equally well, but girls write at greater length and so express themselves better.

- Pupils enjoy English and fully grasp its importance in all learning. As one of the younger pupils put it, "English is about learning to tell people what you think."

Quality of teaching and learning of English

Teaching and learning are outstanding.

- Teachers plan for a range of activities in the lesson and over time. The learning objective of the lesson is made clear to pupils, who then engage willingly in active learning conducted at a good pace.
- Pupils are fully committed to their learning. Relationships and behaviour are excellent.
- Laptops are used well to draft and edit work.
- Marking of work is regular and for the most part gives very clear advice, but there is a degree of variation in guidance provided between classes.
- The mixed-age classes are used to advantage, sometimes with older pupils helping younger ones and sometimes giving some older pupils time to catch up, or go over skills not grasped first time around.
- Teachers plan lessons well.
- Pupils read a lot, but the subject leader has detected a need to extend reading to more demanding books.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is good overall. However, there are some outstanding features.

- Teachers plan work so that imaginative projects often fire pupils' imagination. Pupils to whom I spoke could recall vividly trips and in-school experiences over several years.
- There is a strong emphasis in planning on active learning and collaboration.
- The small school factor is well managed so that it contributes to positive learning in English.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management are outstanding.

- All pupils' progress is well tracked in this small school and intervention is smoothly integrated into the normal flow of class work.
- There is vision, drive and ambition to take what is already a high performing subject in the school to still higher levels. As the subject leader

put it, the school is well placed to, "develop children's passion for literature and to encourage them in reading to open doors through which to explore new worlds."

- The subject leader's self-evaluation is thoughtful and thorough and provides evidence of very good monitoring: it leads to an appropriate action plan. That plan has clear tasks and deadlines, but there is scope for greater precision in success criteria and to insert milestone progress checks. Monitoring and evaluation is very strong.
- Staff have regular updates from the well informed subject leader who keeps up to date well with regional briefings and developments.
- You provide support and encouragement to the subject leader, recognising her high quality and strengths but continuously challenging her to improve.

Creativity in English

Creativity is well embedded in the curriculum. In discussion with me pupils were able to recall in depth how creative lessons and other experiences had developed their abilities in speaking, reading and writing. Stimuli have arisen from trips, for example to Hampton Court where a pupil later set an imaginative play, from visitors, including an African drummer and an Antarctic explorer, and from the recreation of imaginary environments in the classroom and playground. In Year 1/2 pupils received surprise visitors in the form of toys "who" would interact with a central character in the story they were hearing. The subject leader regularly reviews subject plans and seeks evidence of creativity in planning. A further example of imaginative planning was a scenario for Year 3/4 class who role-played, with associated research and writing activities, a scenario involving a proposal to site a rubbish dump in their village.

Areas for improvement discussed included:

- extending the range and quality of literary texts being used
- securing consistency of feedback to pupils on how to improve.

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

Tony Byrne
Additional Inspector