

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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Mr P Henery
Headteacher
Acle St Edmund VC Primary School
Fletcher Way
Acle
Norfolk
NR13 3RQ

Dear Mr Henery

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 28 January 2009 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 good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement in English is good. Standards are above average.

- Pupils enter the Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills which are in line with national expectations. They make good progress by the end of Year 2 to reach standards which are well above average in reading and above average in writing.
- By the end of Year 6 in 2008, pupils made good progress to reach standards that were above average, especially in reading. Standards in writing improved considerably on previous years.
- In 2008 girls performed better than boys at Key Stage 1, particularly in writing. However, there was no significant difference in the performance of boys in relation to girls at Key Stage 2.

- Generally, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities made similar progress to their peers because of effective intervention.
- In the lessons observed, pupils made mostly good progress. They concentrated well, worked collaboratively and took responsibility readily when it was offered to them. However, in some lessons they were over-directed by teachers and had insufficient opportunity to show independence.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

Teaching and learning are good.

- Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they plan lessons thoroughly although most pupils complete similar tasks, some with adult support.
- Lessons are effectively structured and have clear learning objectives. Teachers use a variety of activities with a strong focus on drama, speaking and listening.
- Teachers set high expectations and in the better lessons, challenge pupils to think and develop their ideas. Teaching assistants provide effective support to individuals and groups.
- Teachers generally mark work thoroughly, giving helpful guidance to pupils on how to improve and setting appropriate targets. However, there are differences in approach across classes and not all marking is as effective as the best examples.
- Pupils regularly assess their own work using specific success criteria which help them to understand their progress and what they need to improve further.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is good.

- There is good balance and breadth in teachers' long term plans with appropriate coverage of literacy skills, genres and texts. Teachers increasingly plan effectively to link literacy with other subjects and to provide opportunities to use literacy skills in wider contexts.
- Older pupils complete a substantial amount of written work across a good range of styles and this has contributed to improved standards.
- There is a strong focus on the development of speaking and listening skills and use of drama activities. Pupils enjoy these approaches and consider that they help them to learn.
- There is a good range of events, activities and visitors which extend and enrich the curriculum. Some teachers use interactive white boards and computers very effectively to enhance learning and stimulate pupils' thinking but this is not yet consistent across all classes.
- Intervention programmes are well-planned and closely linked to careful tracking of pupils' progress.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management are good.

- There are clear improvement plans with specific priorities and details of the action to be taken, for example to improve pupils' writing.
- The subject leaders monitor teachers' planning, pupils' progress and work leading to careful analysis of the areas for improvement. They have a good understanding of the strengths and priorities for development in literacy.
- Recent training and review of teaching approaches have led to an increased focus on developing pupils' thinking and language skills through more speaking and drama activities. This has contributed to improved standards in 2008.
- Assessment systems are thorough and pupils' progress is tracked to identify those who may need additional support. Pupils assess their own work regularly using specific criteria but there are still some differences in approach between teachers and the best practice is not always shared.

Creativity in English

The school has developed a bid to work with an animator and philosopher on a creative project designed to extend pupils' skills and experience so that they can pass these on to other pupils in different classes.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that all teachers provide opportunities for pupils to develop their independence and contribute to their learning
- consolidating the best practice in marking and assessment, ensuring that it is shared by all staff.

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