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Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 27 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 three lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be good and improving.

Achievement and standards

Achievement in English is good and improving. Standards are above average.

- Standards at the end of Year 2 have been above average over the last five years with reading particularly strong. In 2008, when there were only five children, writing was stronger than reading.
- At the end of Year 6 in 2008, standards improved and were above average. Reading standards were especially high.
- Pupils make at least satisfactory to the end of Year 2 and good progress to the end of Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties also made good progress.
- There are no significant patterns in the achievement of boys compared to girls.
- In lessons, pupils concentrate well, co-operate with each other and try hard. They enjoy practical activities, including drama and speaking tasks.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

Teaching and learning are good with some strong features.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They plan lessons thoroughly and usually organise work for different groups of pupils by age or attainment. However, most complete similar tasks with some receiving effective, additional adult support.
- Teachers use a good range of activities in lessons with a strong emphasis on speaking, listening and the use of drama. Relationships in classes are very good.
- In the best lessons, teachers ask probing questions to help pupils extend and deepen their ideas and responses. However, in some lessons, teachers' questions do not always challenge pupils sufficiently.
- Pupils know their targets and can explain what they need to do to improve their work. They value teachers' guidance and increasingly assess their own work but rarely assess each other's work.
- Teachers' marking, especially of extended writing, is detailed. An effective system for discussing work with pupils is under review.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is good.

- The planning for mixed age and mixed attainment classes is good.
- The school has begun to adjust its curriculum to consolidate key skills and to plan literacy activities into broader topics which combine several subjects. Pupils say that they enjoy the more varied activities.
- Speaking, listening and drama are well represented and pupils write effectively at length in topics arising from history and religious education.
- Reading is promoted effectively and pupils clearly enjoy opportunities to read fiction.
- There is an increasing range of activities and events which enrich the curriculum.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management in English are good.

- The subject leader has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject, based on a thorough review of provision and careful tracking of pupils' progress.
- The subject leader sets a clear direction for the subject and has ensured that relevant and effective training is available for staff.
- There is a clear vision for literacy within the recent, wider changes to the curriculum.

- An appropriate action plan and recent initiatives in teaching and assessment have contributed to the rise in standards and achievement.

Creativity in English

There have been effective adjustments to the curriculum to combine subjects in broader topics, increasing the range of activities and making learning more active and with real purpose. For example, pupils have benefited from writing in role as evacuees and describing religious festivals for other classes.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that all teachers plan lessons effectively to match success criteria, tasks and resources to differing pupils' attainment
- developing teachers' use of questioning to encourage pupils to provide more extended and considered responses.

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