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Mr G Cullen
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Dear Mr Cullen

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 26 February 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 four lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Standards in English are high. Pupils' achievement is good.

- The school's own data suggests that standards overall are broadly in line with national expectations when pupils enter Key Stage 1. However, the school also receives many pupils of above average ability and this shows in their confidence and fluency when expressing opinions. Many pupils in the Reception class already read and write well for their age.
- Standards are high across the school. Results in Key Stage 1 are consistently above average although reading standards are better than writing. Nearly all pupils achieve at least national expectations in

English at the end of Key Stage 2 and significant numbers reach the higher level 5. Girls do better than boys, especially in writing.

- Achievement is good across the school and is broadly the same for most boys and girls although fewer boys achieve the highest levels in writing. Other groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and able pupils, all achieve equally well.
- Observations in classes confirmed that standards are well above average. Most pupils are confident and articulate speakers who are keen to do well, read with interest and write effectively.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning of English is good.

- Pupils enjoy and speak well of their English lessons although at times they reported that lessons became repetitive and focused too much on writing. Behaviour and attitudes in lessons were very good.
- Teaching observed was consistently good across all classes. Relationships were very strong. Lessons were lively and interesting. Pupils were actively involved, especially through a good range of activities involving discussion or drama. Differentiation in these mixed age classes was managed well through support and resources. Expectations were high and this explained why able pupils made good progress.
- Writing was taught well. Different lessons showed strengths in planning, effective modelling of the writing process by teachers, the use of talk to support writing, and good cross curricular topics which motivated pupils.
- Unit plans are effective and refer to an appropriate number of learning objectives. However, short term plans did not always identify clearly enough the key learning to be developed within individual lessons.
- Assessment was good. Marking was consistent and effective across all classes, giving pupils helpful and regular feedback on their work. Curricular targets for writing were agreed with pupils and signed off when progress had been made. Teachers also made very good use of some specific and helpful targets for reading, including the reading of moving image texts. All this meant that pupils had a better than usual understanding of what was needed to improve their work.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is good.

- The curriculum in English is good because it leads to high standards and promotes pupils' enjoyment well.
- Pupils enjoy English and the occasional themed days. They are mostly very keen readers although lessons do not provide enough opportunity for sharing and talking about books.

- The school has a dedicated library room. This is a good resource. However, it is currently under-used by teachers and pupils and opportunities are missed to integrate it more fully in literacy learning.
- The English curriculum gives good emphasis to speaking and listening. This featured well in all lessons and teachers all plan opportunities for pupils to talk in pairs. The English policy also prioritises drama and this is well used by teachers in their English lessons. The school gives pupils increasing opportunities to work in groups and to speak to wider audiences, for instance in assemblies.
- Planning is good across the school and links are improving between English and other subjects. This works well. The lessons observed included good contexts for extending literacy skills through other subjects. The work sample also confirmed that plenty of opportunities are provided for pupils to write at length in subjects other than English.
- Curriculum enrichment is good for such a small school. A number of clubs operate including, until recently, a drama club. Pupils' experiences are enhanced by a wide range of visits such as to Southwell work house.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management of English are good.

- The quality of the subject documentation was good, including, for example, an effective English policy that provided clear guidance to staff.
- Monitoring and evaluation are good. You have already completed lesson observations in all four classes and the school also makes use of regular work sampling and questionnaires for pupils.
- Subject planning is good. There are detailed and specific plans to improve standards in English as well as plans dealing with literacy within the broader development of the school. The plans were of good quality although the success criteria tended to be too vague.
- School self evaluation in English is effective. Your self evaluation accurately identified strengths and the areas for improvement were appropriate. You have clear ideas about what needs to be done to improve writing and develop assessment.
- The capacity for further improvement is good.

Creativity in English

I enjoyed observing the whole school assembly based on the National Gallery's initiative "Take one picture". This had provided all pupils with an interesting context within which to develop literacy. There was evidence of good oral work, writing for a purpose, and good collaboration on an animated film produced by the older pupils. The school is keen to develop creativity and is encouraging this through themed days and more cross curricular work, a

good range of extra curricular activity, links with a school in Ghana, and drama based work.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving the clarity of learning objectives within individual lessons
- extending use of the library by pupils and teachers.

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