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Mr N Parker
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Dear Mr Parker

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 11 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 six lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is outstanding and standards are well above average.

- Children's skills are generally average when they start the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). They achieve above expectations by the time they enter Year 1.
- Standards by the end of Key Stage 1 are high, especially in writing.
- Pupils make very good progress through Key Stage 2. Over time, results in national tests are well above average.
- Both boys' and girls' attainment in writing is particularly strong, thanks to the school's highly effective initiatives. This is reflected in their writing about all areas of the curriculum. Stories by pupils in Year 5

and 6, currently exhibited as part of the school's Writers' Convention, are accomplished and highly individual.

- Pupils enjoy learning, especially through the creative activities used widely in the school.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

Teaching and learning are outstanding.

- Interest in reading and writing is stimulated by rich experiences within and outside the classroom. For example, a visit to woodland helped Year 2 enter the world of "A Midsummer's Night Dream". Creative writing with a local author has given older pupils an empowering sense of themselves as writers, as well as an interest in reading a wider range of novels.
- Teachers make good use of creative approaches to stimulate speaking and listening and prepare pupils for writing. This was illustrated well by a teacher who expertly drew pupils in Year 2 into re-living an episode from "James and the Giant Peach", leading them in role to talk about the amazing peach. From the EYFS upwards, such learning has had a positive effect on writing, especially for pupils who lack confidence.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of the purpose of their writing, helped by a realistic context, clear modelling, and encouragement to make independent choices. Pupils in Year 5, writing up their research into their own questions about the planets, had a clear grasp of how to report in connected and vivid prose so their writing would be more interesting than their text book.
- Discerning use is made of information and communication technology, for example, to model the writing process.
- Close observation and assessment give teachers detailed understanding of what each pupil can already do and needs to do next, and this knowledge is put to very effective use. Resources, tasks and extra help are carefully tailored, and plans are meticulously reviewed in the light of pupils' progress to keep everyone on track. Pupils show a clear understanding of their targets and achievement.
- Pupils greatly appreciate the ways in which teachers make learning interesting and help all of them to make progress. They especially like making independent choices about their writing, pointing out that this has led to some of their best work.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum is outstanding.

- Staff have the confidence to use the National Framework in ways which work best for their pupils.
- From the EYFS onwards, pupils are encouraged to communicate in exciting and realistic contexts. For example, boys in the Reception

class collaborated with a real sense of urgency when building a tower to resist the Big Bad Wolf.

- Rich shared experiences, including visits, are used well to stimulate speaking, listening and writing.
- Classes regularly read challenging and substantial books together.
- Consistent and effective approaches are used in learning to link sounds and letters and to comprehend and create text.
- Homework is purposeful and productive.
- Plans are adapted in the light of pupils' response or particular interest.
- The imaginative range of enrichments is exemplified by the current Writers' Convention in which older pupils present their creative writing to a wider audience.

Leadership and of English

Leadership and management are outstanding.

- The leadership team shares a clear and ambitious vision for the subject and infectious enthusiasm for finding ever better ways to teach it. As a result, pupils across the school make very good progress and develop a strong interest in English.
- Self-evaluation is very thorough.
- Good team work has developed the confidence of staff to set higher expectations and take creative risks. As their meticulously annotated plans show, teachers rigorously evaluate the impact of their approaches on their pupils and take effective action to dismantle obstacles in the way of progress. This has meant that very good provision continues to improve. For example, boys' early speaking and listening has responded well to suitably integrated construction activities.

Creativity in English

The school has discovered that creative approaches have a positive impact on pupils' confidence in expressing themselves. The quality of pupils' speaking and writing improved with the use of high quality drama. A spacious, flexibly furnished studio gives pupils a good environment for creative activity, but ordinary classrooms too are rapidly cleared to make space for drama. Most recently, a residential weekend has allowed older pupils and teachers to share the writing process with a local author, with lasting effects on their understanding of what it takes to write well.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

There are no areas for improvement.

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