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Mr M Willis
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Dear Mr Willis

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 13 March 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 two lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Standards are above average. Achievement is good.

- The school's assessment of attainment on entry indicates broadly average standards, with some pupils achieving highly.
- Pupils make good progress overall and all groups achieve equally well, although progress in writing varies within year groups.
- In 2008, standards were above average at Level 4+ and just above average at Level 5. This shows a substantial rise at Level 4+ from the previous year, most notably in writing. A drop in results at Level 5 was due mainly to the underperformance of boys in writing.
- Standards of speaking and listening are above average. Pupils listen to each other critically and well. They speak clearly and fluently with good

regard to purpose and many offer extended personal responses with confidence.

- Standards of handwriting and presentation are good and work on display celebrates achievement well.
- English makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development through good opportunities for speaking and listening, collaboration and the exchange of viewpoints in lessons.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning in English is good.

- Some teaching observed was outstanding.
- Good planning secures good progress. Objectives and outcomes are clear, learning is sequenced well and skills are taught carefully. Expectations are high and work is matched to need, although some higher attaining pupils are not challenged consistently in writing.
- Teachers have at least satisfactory subject knowledge, provide interesting and engaging activities and use a range of teaching and learning strategies and good quality resources. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to motivate pupils and for the presentation of work.
- Very good relationships with pupils and between pupils themselves are highly conducive to learning and independent learning is promoted strongly.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning, enjoy English, work hard, behave very well and contribute eagerly to lessons.
- Adults in classrooms provide good support for pupils who need help with their learning.
- Assessment informs planning and pupils are actively involved in evaluating their learning against clear targets. Work is marked regularly and with care. Comments are informing pupils as to how to improve, although with some inconsistency.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The English curriculum has undergone fundamental review. It secures breadth, balance and progression successfully and meets the needs of pupils well, although progression in basic skills is not yet mapped sufficiently. Provision for cultural diversity is good.
- Provision for writing has strengthened markedly, resulting in improved outcomes. The strong focus on speaking and listening, drama and media work supports achievement. Personal reading is promoted strongly and enjoyed by pupils.

- Pupils are proud of their achievements and identify interesting tasks, good cross-curricular links and excellent provision for enrichment activities as contributing to their good progress.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management are good.

- Significant staffing difficulties have been resolved, leadership of English secured and past underachievement tackled well.
- The school has an accurate understanding of strengths and weaknesses. The draft English policy provides a clear sense of direction, good analysis of data informs planning for improvement and good action is underway to address key priorities and secure consistency.
- Inclusion is good. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully and well targeted interventions and support result in good gains in learning.
- Provision is monitored and evaluated regularly. The good focus on systematic tracking and discussions with pupils about their targets is contributing clearly to improvements in writing in particular. Regular whole-school moderation of writing secures consistent levelling and informs planning.
- Well considered professional development is aligned with priorities and includes the dissemination of best practice.

Creativity in English

- Creativity, and the choice of relevant contexts for pupils' writing in particular, is considered carefully in planning for English.
- In some teaching observed, innovation and creativity secured provision of outstanding quality.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- continuing to raise standards in writing, particularly for higher attaining pupils
- mapping progression systematically in basic skills.

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

Rosemary Matthews
Her Majesty's Inspector