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Mrs E Sheedy
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Sheedy

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 09 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 five lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good. Standards are average.

- Pupils achieve well. Children start nursery education with low levels of communication, language and literacy skills. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage, although many do not reach the expected level for their age and consequently attainment on entry to Key Stage 1 is below average. Pupils progress well and reach average standards by the end of Year 2.
- At Key Stage 2, standards at Level 4 and 5 are average by the end of Year 6, although attainment in reading is well above writing.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language receive good support and make good progress.
- Good emphasis on speaking and listening secures good standards. Pupils listen well to each other and express their views clearly.

- Good provision for personal development, such as through talk partners, collaborative groups, assemblies and the school council makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' speaking and listening skills. Empathy is promoted strongly through engagement in texts and in writing.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Expectations for achievement are high and good planning for learning secures good progression. Lessons are structured well. Clear objectives and outcomes enable pupils to reflect on their own progress, challenging tasks are well matched to the needs of learners, skills are taught systematically and good use of questioning furthers learning.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge and engage pupils in well resourced and interesting activities that include good use of information and communication technology (ICT). Independent learning is encouraged strongly and pupils are given good opportunities for reflection and review of progress towards individual curricular targets.
- Pupils enjoy English and behave well. They have positive attitudes to learning and they are eager to contribute to lessons, collaborate and share their ideas. Very good relationships and good support for pupils struggling with learning secure good achievement.
- Assessment is a very strong feature of planning and underachievement is identified promptly. Accurate levelling and marking of good quality secures progress. Pupils know their targets, how to achieve them and value the good support they receive to do so.
- Well trained teaching assistants provide good support to targeted pupils that results in good gains in learning.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The carefully structured curriculum, with its strong focus on basic skills, meets the needs of pupils well. The renewed framework for literacy extends breadth and balance and informs planning for lessons. Good provision for media and ICT stimulates learning and accelerates progress. Provision for cultural diversity is good.
- Good provision for enrichment activities links explicitly to planning for English and learning in classrooms.
- Cross-curricular links are developing well and pupils have good opportunities to use writing skills learnt in English in other subjects.
- The good focus on home learning activities enables parents to support their children's achievement well.

- High quality displays in classrooms and corridors celebrate learning well and provide good models for achievement.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management are good.

- The school is addressing low standards on entry and some underachievement well. Strong and determined leadership, a clear vision for English and clear policies and procedures secure provision, accelerate progress and have raised standards.
- There is an accurate understanding of strengths and areas for development and good planning for improvement. Good investment in the continuing professional development of teaching and support staff secures priorities.
- Provision, and its impact on improved outcomes for learning, is monitored systematically and evaluated rigorously and regularly.
- Inclusion is promoted strongly. Data is used well to target a good range of carefully planned interventions, including for more able pupils, which result in good gains in learning. Pupils' achievements are tracked very closely and reviewed regularly to secure progress.

Creativity in English

- The school is making good progress in combining subjects across the curriculum to provide broader contexts for learning and to secure skills in English.
- To this end, creativity in the teaching of writing in particular is encouraged strongly, clear in planning and in lessons, and improving outcomes.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- continuing to raise standards in English, and in writing in particular
- further developing creativity in English through cross-curricular planning that secures further improvement in outcomes.

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