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Mrs G Evans
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Evans

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 24 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 three lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Standards in English are broadly average. Pupils' achievement is good.

- Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below expectations in aspects of literacy and communication. Although they make progress across the Early Years Foundation Stage, many pupils move into Year 1 with skills and understanding which are not yet secure in English, particularly writing.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are in line with, and slightly above, the national average. This reflects good achievement by pupils, particularly as most pupils are speakers of English as an additional language.

- Performance in English is consistently better than in mathematics and science.
- Despite improvements in recent years, standards in writing are lower than standards in reading. In particular, boys achieve less well than girls in writing, especially at the higher levels.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning of English is good.

- Pupils are very keen to do well and work hard. They enjoy English lessons, especially when there are opportunities to use their imagination and work creatively.
- Lessons observed all showed good relationships between teachers and pupils. There were good opportunities for pupils to talk about their work, especially in pairs. Planning was consistent in identifying both learning objectives in lessons and the outcomes for pupils. Teachers were beginning to make effective use of self and peer review. Writing activities were sometimes well linked to topic work although opportunities were missed to emphasise the audience and context for writing.
- Although approaches to planning were consistent, some teachers were not clear enough about the learning outcomes in lessons and this limited progress for pupils. Teaching assistants worked well to support particular groups of pupils but were sometimes under-used in the early parts of lessons.
- Practice in assessment is variable. The best marking gives very clear feedback to pupils about areas of strength, weaknesses and pupils' progress in relation to the learning aims. Some marking lacks detail and is less specific in explaining the next steps for pupils. Some pupils were able to speak very clearly about their targets in English but this was not always the case, reflecting different approaches to the use of curricular targets in English.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is good.

- The school is developing its curriculum to increase pupils' motivation, emphasise creativity and improve the links between English and other subjects. There was some evidence that this is already having a positive impact both in lessons observed and in pupils' overall enjoyment of learning in English.
- The school has placed a particular emphasis on drama through regular lessons for all pupils across Key Stage 2 and school productions. Pupils' progress in speaking and listening is further enhanced by good opportunities for discussion in lessons.

- Reading is well promoted and enjoyed by pupils. Pupils enjoy sharing whole class texts and private reading time, and the school is developing its provision for guided reading through extra resources. It is also reviewing the ways in which pupil's independent reading can be discussed and written about.
- Standards in writing have improved at least partly in response to recent developments including the emphasis on pupils' writing for a purpose and with interest. Opportunities for writing and talking are increasingly being identified within topic work. Pupils have good opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT) in English through timetabled sessions in the ICT suite as well as access to laptops for writing and research. Pupils' involvement in moving image work is limited at present.
- The curriculum is enhanced by a range of enrichment activities. There is considerable emphasis on drama including regular school productions and practical work on Shakespeare for older pupils. Out of school visits and trips are increasingly being used to stimulate work in English.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management of English are good.

- The school has restructured its leadership team to provide two assistant headteachers who lead on the core subjects, including English. Although both are newly in post, this is already working well. The two subject leaders work closely together, each taking responsibility for different key stages. The capacity for further improvement is good.
- The subject leaders have already reported to the governing body on developments in writing and carried out a thorough subject review last term making use of work and planning samples. Lesson observations will take place next term when the emphasis moves from mathematics to English, as identified in the Raising Achievement Plan.
- The school's self evaluation in English is accurate. Senior leaders are well aware of the need to raise standards in writing and the most recent results suggest that some of the measures taken have already proved effective. Current plans identify a good range of appropriate actions to improve provision further.

Creativity in English

The school is planning to develop its own "creative curriculum". This focuses on improving pupils' motivation and their enjoyment of learning through more cross curricular work and practical activities. In the Year 2 lesson observed, for instance, pupils enjoyed an English lesson which linked personal writing with the overall topic of entertainment and gave them opportunities to write about their favourite television programme. Drama work enables pupils to use

their initiative and work both independently and together. The enrichment activities described above also contribute effectively to enhanced creativity in English.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving standards of writing, especially by boys
- clarifying the learning aims and outcomes in lessons in order to provide a clearer purpose and direction to pupils' work.

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