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Mr D Brooksby  
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Dear Mr Brooksby

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 30 April 2009 to look at work 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 together with one Every Child a Reader (ECAR) session. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards in English are below average.

- Despite good progress in English in the Early Years Foundation Stage, many pupils still enter Key Stage 1 with attainment that is below expectations, especially in writing.
- Standards are below average at the end of Key Stage 1 although results have improved in writing over recent years. Standards remain below average at the end of Key Stage 2 and pupils tend to perform better in reading than in writing.
- Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory as they move through the school. The school acknowledges that pupils' learning tends to slow across Key Stage 2 as some pupils become less positive in their attitudes towards work. However, achievement in English at Key Stage 2 has improved over the past three years.

- Boys performed much less well than girls at the end of both Key Stages 1 and 2 last year. However, this is not a settled pattern; indeed, boys have previously attained as highly as girls in reading and this is better than the national trend. A gap between standards in girls' and boys' writing remains.
- In general, the different groups of pupils in the school achieve equally well. There is some evidence that the minority group of Pakistani pupils do well, as do some pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- English lessons make a good contribution to pupils' personal development. There are frequent opportunities to discuss and exchange ideas, to take part in drama productions and to present work in school assemblies. This helps pupils to gain in confidence and work effectively together.

### Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning of English is satisfactory.

- There were good features to teaching in all lessons observed. Relationships with pupils were consistently good and teachers managed classes well. Lessons were mostly lively and well paced and this helped to engage pupils. Teachers planned frequent activities that gave pupils opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills. Good support was offered by the extensive team of classroom assistants, especially during group work within lessons. Lessons observed were also marked by good use of whole class texts that were enjoyed by pupils.
- Planning for units of work is good and identifies clearly the learning objectives over a period of time. However, teachers were less clear about the planned learning within individual lessons and this sometimes limited pupils' progress. In addition, expectations were sometimes too low and teachers were too easily satisfied by the quality of work produced by pupils.
- Discussions with pupils confirmed that the school's approach to assessment and target setting works well. Pupils know their curricular targets in writing and mostly understand how to improve them. This reflects some good quality marking which uses the "stars and wishes" approach to identify the next steps in learning for pupils. However, the quality of marking is variable and some is not clear enough in helping pupils to understand what to do next.

### Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is good.

- The curriculum in English is currently effective at enabling pupils to enjoy lessons and it contributes well to their personal development. The positive impact of changes to the curriculum is evident in recent improved achievement across Key Stage 2.

- Pupils enjoy English and are keen to do well.
- The school has developed an effective approach to reading and this is reflected in better performance by boys in the national tests. Reading is developed through guided group work, as well as independent reading outside school. Resources have been enhanced and teachers work hard to involve parents in supporting their children's reading at home. Teachers make good use of quality literary texts. As a result, pupils talk knowledgeably about individual writers.
- The school is currently developing its curriculum in order to improve pupils' engagement, particularly boys, and this is reflected in closer links between work in English and other subjects. This is leading to the use of interesting topics that make pupils keen to learn.
- The curriculum in English is enhanced by a range of other activities in school, including opportunities for drama work and more focus on speaking and listening. Information and communication technology is well used to support literacy and the school is developing some interesting media-based work. Themed weeks, including an annual Book Week, also enrich provision in English.
- Staff work very hard to provide additional support for pupils. This includes a range of activities, such as a Literacy Club, within the extended day programme. There is also a substantial amount of support through intervention programmes. This currently includes involvement by the school in the Making Good Progress national pilot and one-to-one support through the ECAR initiative.
- Although pupils enjoy English, they tend to be less positive about writing. Evidence from the work sample suggested that some teachers set too few extended writing tasks for pupils and miss opportunities to develop pupils' stamina and concentration for writing.

### Leadership and management of English

- The school has recognised the need to improve standards in English and to accelerate progress across Key Stage 2. Recent test results suggest that current changes are beginning to have a positive impact. Teachers are encouraged to exercise flexibility in planning and are increasingly choosing topics that motivate pupils and link different areas of the curriculum.
- The school's self-evaluation in English is realistic and based securely on outcomes for pupils. There is a strong and shared determination to achieve higher standards in English. The current subject plan provides effective action to improve reading but needs to clarify strategies for improving achievement at Key Stage 2 and raising standards in writing.
- The school tracks pupils' progress well and uses this effectively to target additional support for pupils. There is a substantial intervention programme. It collects a significant amount of data but does not yet analyse this effectively enough to identify trends in English, for instance in reading/writing or for different groups of pupils.

- The subject leader has provided effective training and guidance for teachers in a range of important areas. She has evaluated the impact of recent reading changes through taking the views of parents and pupils. Lesson observations over the past year have focused on mathematics but there are plans for the subject leader to extend her monitoring role through joint lesson observations with members of the senior leadership team.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising achievement in English across Key Stage 2, especially in writing
- improving teaching through higher expectations of pupils' capability and clearer identification of planned learning in individual lessons.

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